LIGHT FOR LIFE

PART I

CHANDAVARKAR

Lakhmi Chand Bahl.

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TO

THE MEMORY

OF

NACHIKETA,

THE MODEL YOUTH OF INDIA,

DESCRIBED IN THE UPANISHADS.

PREFACE

THE chapters in this book have been arranged substantially in accordance with the excellent syllabus on Moral Education prepared by the Educational Department of the Presidency of Madras.

My endeavour throughout has been to make the volume particularly suitable for the use of Indian students in the Upper Classes of our High Schools. I have sought to show how the truths of morality have been evolved by the religious and social life of the people of India from their own experiences.

I have availed myself of the leading ideas in the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Gnaneshwari*, the well-known poetic commentary on the former by the Mahratta saint *Jnyaneshwara*.

The truths of morality are the same for all men, to whatever country or race they belong. But while they are the same everywhere, every nation has evolved them in its own way. To the Indian student those truths will appeal forcibly and effectively if they are presented to him in such a way as to unfold them from the Indian point of view. But, as has been said, one can know one's own religion or country at its best only when one has learnt it by the light of the civilizations of other countries. While, therefore, I have, in this book, made it my main endeavour to give it an Indian cast, I have also illustrated the truths of morality by frequent references to the Bible and the Koran, and the literatures of other countries.

My thanks are due to Mr. K. A. Viraraghavachariar, B.A., Educational Advisor to Messrs. Macmillan & Co., Madras, for the helpful suggestions I received from him in the preparation of the chapters of the two volumes of this book.

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N. G. CHANDAVARKAR.

PEDDER ROAD,
CUMBALLA HILL,
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Volume I

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS MORAL EDUCATION?

IN his Life of Lycurgus, who gave laws and a political constitution to Sparta in ancient Greece, Plutarch tells us that Lycurgus, before applying himself 'to alter the whole frame of the constitution,' travelled to Crete and from there passed to Asia to study the character and government of the various nations. At last, before returning to Sparta, he visited India. 'In his Indian excursions,' says Plutarch, 'Lycurgus conversed with the *Gymnosophists*,' a name for Indian priests and philosophers. From them he learnt that the Indian priests and philosophers, who had a great aversion to idleness, were so careful about the moral education of the youth of India that 'every pupil of theirs was obliged to give account every day of some good he had done, either by *meditation or action*, before he was allowed to sit down to dinner.' Such has been India's aim of education, poetically personified as *Saraswati*, the goddess of learning, whose gifts to her devotees are Goodness, Truth, and Beauty.

Man is a rational being, because by his power of reason he can distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil, true and false, not merely as a pastime but for his

own conduct in the serious business of life. By means of his reason, man frames rules for his conduct in life. These rules, which he has made as the result of his observation and experience, are called the rules of morality and are so prescribed because they have been found by men to be necessary. In India we call morality *niti*, a word derived from the Sanskrit word *nita*, which literally means that which leads or conduces to what is right and good. Morality is the practical reason of man. It is reason which does not waste itself in mere dreams but weds itself to action.

Moral education, therefore, may be defined as instruction in the science and art of right conduct. It is a science, because it is knowledge of the rules or principles of right conduct. It is an art, because it is the practice or observance of those principles in daily life.

This definition of Moral Education may be put in another form. Moral Education is the science and art of the higher expediencies or conveniences of life. Expediency is the means of attaining a desired end. But the means used may be either good or bad. Bad means may achieve the end as quickly or even more quickly than good. If money or profit is my end, I may be able to get it more easily by telling a lie or practising fraud than by honest work and industry. In that case my object may be achieved at the cost of my reason and my reputation. Moreover the success and the gain attained by the shorter cuts of lower expediency are

short-lived. Sooner or later the man who uses them is found out as an immoral—because unreliable—person, and loses not only his character but also the satisfaction of his own reason. The experience of mankind from ancient times has, therefore, through its scriptures, laws and literature, accepted the universal truth of morality and embodied it in the form of precepts and proverbs. For instance, the Hindu religion through its *Upanishads* lays down that 'Truth alone conquers'. The *Bhagavad Gita* says: 'A righteous man never goes to waste.' The Bible preaches: 'Righteousness alone exalteth a nation.' Mahomed's ordinance is 'A perfect Moslem is he from whose tongue and hands mankind is safe.' He is a true Mahomedan who is true and kind in word and deed. Buddha laid down that the only true worship is that of the man and woman who are 'pure in life and faithful in duty'.

Moral rules of conduct are enjoined not because they bring riches, honour, or other material gain. A moral man may fail and often does fail to attain them, whereas an immoral man oftener succeeds as success goes in the world. But the reason why morality is obligatory on man is that virtue is its own reward.

Daily experience proves that the immoral man, in spite of worldly enjoyment and even success, usually suffers for his conduct. 'Mankind,' writes Lord Morley, 'has decided that Prudence and Continence and Order are good things, because the breach of such virtues is,

in the long run, deadly to mutual trust, to strength, and to freedom.' Manu, the Hindu law-giver, says: 'Bad actions are like seeds sown in the ground: they do not immediately produce a crop, like a cow which gives milk the moment she is milked. But, like seeds, they in their turn produce seeds, which are ground in the mills of Time, and, instead of producing good for man, slowly but surely clog the wheels until at last they destroy the whole fabric of the machinery.'

On the other hand Marshal Foch, writing on the value of Moral Courage, i.e. the belief in what is right, says: 'The most important element in War is conviction in Right—the knowledge of what is right and the will to conquer by means of what is right, carries all before it.'

The last war has shown how a nation can ruin itself and ruin also the work of centuries of civilization, because it has ignored the moral factor in both national and individual life. As a writer has expressed it, 'Recent events have shown in a theatrical light that we deny moral consciousness not only at our peril but at the penalty of the extinction of man from this planet in the future. Mankind will have some time or other to rely upon co-operation and the moral order or he will cease to be mankind.' Writing on the great orator and statesman, William Ewart Gladstone, who was Prime Minister of England during part of Queen Victoria's reign, Lord Bryce says that the attachment of the people to Gladstone's name was due to their loyalty and gratitude to

his character. Referring to this observation, Mr. Harold Begbie tells us that Lord Morley said in a conversation with him once that what made the latter revere Mr. Gladstone was his personality, i.e. his character. Moral enthusiasm, observes Mr. Begbie, was the secret of Gladstone's power and he concludes with these words: 'We run after cleverness, astuteness, adroitness, trickery. We are caught by the phrase. But there is no moral steadiness in our minds and hearts. We forget that character is the greatest thing in the world. Nevertheless it really is; it really and truly is.'

CHAPTER I

PERSONAL DUTIES

THE first duty which a youth owes to himself in respect of his moral education relates to his own person. He must develop his personality.

The word Personality means in English the same as the word *Paurusham* in Sanskrit and in the Indian vernaculars. But Personality and *Paurusham* imply more. They mean not merely a man, but they mean a *manly man*, one who has the qualities of manliness. Reflect on the character, for instance, of Sri Ramchandra, the hero of the Indian epic, *Ramayana*, or the career of Emperor Asoka, who ruled India 250 years before the Christian era, or the Mogul Emperor Akbar. These heroes were each a personality.

According to the Hindu *Shastras*, the object of education is to develop the spirit of *Paurusham* in a youth so as to make a strong man of him. From the *Upanishads* we learn that the teacher and his pupils in the class in those days prayed: 'Let us unite to develop the organs of our bodies and all our faculties, and let us all together aim at growth of strong character in ourselves.' That prayer is the same as the advice in the Bible: 'Quit ye like men; be strong.' That is to say, learn to go through life without fear, conquer difficulty: undaunted by failure, serve men by seeking their good as your own.

The Maratha saint, Sri Jnyaneshwara, in his poetic commentary on the *Gita*, speaks of these qualities as the

true *spiritual wealth*, meaning that the true wealth of a country consists in the possession by its people of qualities of the spirit which unite them in the bonds of truth, love, and other virtues that constitute a sound moral character.

When Pericles in his address to the Athenians in ancient Greece said that, while other States were famous for growing corn, wine, and oil, Athens was famous for 'growing men', he meant that the real riches of Athens consisted not so much in its fertile land and its rich produce, as in the kind of men it produced,—its personalities.

It is necessary to trace to its origin this meaning of Personality or *Paurusham*, because both words are often used by people in the wrong sense, i.e. of men who are headstrong, but without the motive force of morality.

The word *person* is derived from the Latin word *persona* which was first used among the Romans to denote a mask or character assumed by an actor in a theatrical performance. Then by analogy the word came to be applied to any subject of the Roman Empire who was clothed or invested by the law with certain rights. When Christianity became the State religion of the Roman Empire, the word was used for the form which God took when He descended to Earth and became Man, just as according to Hinduism, Vishnu became one of the *Avatars*, Sri Rama, or Sri Krishna.

Personality or *Paurusham* is, therefore, in its true meaning, whether according to the *Bhagavad Gita* or the Bible, the character of God in man. The descent of God into man as a Person or *Avatar* signifies as the essential mark of personality the moral quality of

humanity, i.e. of God's love which has come down into man to serve, save, and uplift the human race. When, therefore, we speak of the personal duties of a man, we mean those duties which he must perform to perfect his personality. Personality is, therefore, the capacity for union with, and service for others.

When a student is advised to make the perfection of personality his first aim, he is likely to ask: 'Is not such perfection impossible for man? Why preach to us students this unattainable aim, pursuit of which is bound to end in failure and disappointment?'

This very objection that such an aim is beyond the reach of mortal man was raised by Arjuna when Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* preached to him the doctrine of duty. 'Master', said Arjuna, addressing Sri Krishna, 'How can I, a poor human being, follow the path of duty? Man's mind is unsteady, his will is weak. The moment I apply my mind to your advice, it begins to waver. I lose heart. What am I to do? Pray show me the way.'

Sri Krishna replied: 'Arjuna! I quite sympathize with you. Do not think that when I advise you to strive for perfection in personality by following the path of duty, I forget that you are but a man, and that man's mind and will are weak and wavering. But remember at the same time that man is so made that out of his very weakness he can make himself strong. Out of hindrance he can get help.'

Arjuna asked: 'How can that be, Lord? Please speak in plain language and explain. Pray do not confuse my understanding by words hard to understand.'

Sri Krishna answered: 'Be patient and listen. I will make it so plain that even a child should be able to

understand. What is your difficulty in the cultivation of personality? You complain that you cannot follow the path of duty which I preach because your mind is weak and wanders. Have courage, do not faint or lose heart; there is a remedy for it and it is in your own power. When I advise you to become perfect by means of concentration of your mind on the path of duty, I do not mean that you should rise to the height of that path all at once. A bird can pluck a fruit on a branch of a tree in a minute. Why? Because it has wings. But if a man wishes to get a same fruit, he cannot fly up like a bird, since he has no wings. He has to climb up the tree step by step and pluck the fruit. So with you. When you wish to follow the Path of Duty you must proceed steadily step by step. That means you must follow the path of practice. Practice makes perfect. Try that and see if you cannot succeed. Therefore, Arjuna, take heart, my beloved friend! Understand that by practice nothing is impossible.'

Arjuna heard all this and felt somewhat encouraged. But still he had some doubts. 'Lord,' said he to Sri Krishna, 'I understand so far. But do you mean that by practice any man can attain to perfection even if he be weak of mind? What kind of practice do you mean?'

'Well asked, Arjuna,' said Sri Krishna, 'That is the way to learn and acquire wisdom—to question, to think and solve your doubts. Now, let me answer your question. You ask what I mean by this practice which makes men perfect. Listen. Self-control, constant effort, patience—these are the conditions to become perfect by means of practice. Patience is power. Patient toil is victory.'

Arjuna felt a little bewildered at this. He said in his own mind: 'How can I control myself, how can I learn to be steady and constant in effort, how am I to be patient?' He was silent for a while. Sri Krishna, who could see what was vexing Arjuna, asked: 'Are you still faint-hearted? What is troubling you?' 'Pardon me, Lord,' replied Arjuna, 'I am a sinner. I am not worthy of you pearls of wisdom. I am not fit for all you counsel.' Sri Krishna smiled and said: 'Arjuna, you cry *I am not fit*. That is a coward's cry. Men who despair are drags on this world. They hinder progress. They have no faith, no sense of responsibility. You speak as if there is a mine in the soil of the earth from which fitness can be dug out like gold or silver or iron. No, the mine is in yourself. It is in your own power to dig into the mine of your soul and make yourself fit for anything you desire in this world—for any high place, any great duty. Whether a man is fit for anything can be realized only after he himself has striven. The fit man is he who steadily and patiently tries to achieve what he aims at. The only man who is not fit for anything is the man without self-control. How can you grow into perfection, if you merely aspire to be perfect and do not attempt to fit yourself slowly and steadily. Keep before your mind what you wish to be; every time your mind wanders, bring it back to your object. Always try to advance step by step to that aim, never go back. Imitate the river which in its career to the ocean never flows backwards but steadily moves forward. Thus after steady continued effort the object you aim at and pursue will become yours, and you will become what you aspire and aim to be in life.'

CHAPTER II

DUTY TO THE BODY

OUR first duty is thus the care of the body. The body must be kept fit or else life becomes a burden.

There is a Latin proverb which says that a man should have a sound mind in a sound body. We cannot think well and effectively when the body is weak or sickly. Nor can we act efficiently with a feeble body, constantly liable to ill-health. The human body is in fact the base or foundation on which human life rests. On that account care of the body has been regarded as the first duty of man from of old. The Latin proverb quoted above shows the great importance attached to that duty by the ancient Romans, on whose civilization the modern world is built. In ancient Greece, the human body was looked upon as a little world in itself, capable of being rounded into beauty by proper observance of the laws of its growth. A Greek philosopher wrote: 'If our youths are to do their work in life, must they not make their graces and harmonies their perpetual aim?' The body is not one member but consists of different members, such as the head, eyes, nose, mouth, ears, hands, legs and feet, all which go to constitute the human figure. Each of these members has its own peculiar grace and beauty. When all the members are well proportioned and well shaped, then their different beauties also unite into the greater beauty of the whole which is called the body. The beauty of the body,

according to the ancient Greeks, formed the grace and harmony of man.

The ancient Hindus also held the same idea. In the *Rig Veda*, the Universe is spoken of as being governed in an orderly manner, regulated by certain laws. These laws are described as the laws of right living, binding on men. That is to say, man must be right with those laws to live well or their breach brings on its penalty. But what is man and where is man's soul ? In his body that is made of bone, flesh and muscle. So thinking our ancient *Rishis* found that the human body, mortal as it is, is sacred. They compared the body to a house, and described it as a temple, a treasure-house of God. Our *Puranas* say that 'personality (*paurusham*) cannot be acquired by man without the help of his body. Therefore, take care of the body and by such care earn wealth and perform acts of merit.' In the Hindu religion the body is held to be so sacred that Sri Krishna compares it in the *Bhagavad Gita* to a field fit for cultivation and growing corn for food. A farmer or peasant ploughs his field, removes all thorns and weeds, cuts the soil into furrows, sows good seeds in it, and then produces its harvest. That is cultivation. Similarly, by cultivation the human body yields the harvest of good thoughts and noble actions.

When Buddha one morning set out, as was his daily wont, to beg for alms, he arrived at a place where a rich land-owner was distributing corn among his tenants. Buddha went and stood among the tenants with his bowl held out for a handful of corn as alms from the landlord. The landlord, seeing Buddha in the garb of a monk, said to him, 'Why do you come here for alms ? Here I give corn only to those who are peasants, who

work on fields and cultivate them. You are not a cultivator of the soil You are a beggar. You do not work but lead an idle life and live on other people's charity. Leave this place.' Buddha replied, 'I too am a peasant cultivating my field. My body is my field. I plough and furrow it, remove weeds, sow good seed into it and reap the harvest of *Nirvana* or Peace. I restrain my body by self-control, pure thoughts and good action. Listen when I tell you how I cultivate my body which is my field. Faith is my seed. Steady effort or practice is my rain. Thought is my plough with purity as its middle pole. My mind is the rope that binds all these together. My power of attention is the iron piece fixed to the plough and guides it. Like a cultivator or farmer, I protect my body from sin and I am temperate in eating. My truthfulness is my weeder. Peace is my rest. My energy is my bullocks which lead me to happiness. Having attained this harvest of happiness, I am free from sorrow. This is the way I cultivate my body and reap my harvest of eternal bliss.' This speech of Buddha so impressed the landlord that Buddha got his alms, and the landlord became one of his disciples.

The same sanctity is attached to the body by Christianity and Mahomedanism. In the Bible the body is spoken of as the temple of God, because the Spirit of God dwells in it. Mahomed, the Prophet of Islam, regarded the human body in the same light. One day as a bier was passing by, he stood up out of respect for the dead man. He was told it was the bier of a Jew. He replied: 'Was it not the holder of a soul from which we should take example and fear?' Because he considered the body sacred and its care a religious duty of daily life,

he laid down the rule that the followers of Islam should wash the body five times a day.

How wonderful is the structure of the body, how marvellous its growth! How admirably fitted it is to make man think nobly, aspire highly, act daringly and subdue Nature by finding out her secrets and allying her to his purposes! How from the moment man is born his body grows slowly from day to day; and the growth is so quiet that the man cannot see it or feel its process! Manu, the Hindu law-giver, says that the organs of the body are every minute at work. In the prayer addressed to God by a poet he shows how God's Spirit moves the body :—

In quietude Thy Spirit grows
In man from hour to hour ;
In calm eternal onward flows
Thy all-redeeming power.

It is not the growth of the body only that is a marvel. Its structure and its action too are wonderful. Each organ has its function allotted to it. They work so quietly that the man does not feel their motion. What is more, all organs, except the heart, have their hours of work and of rest. But the heart alone works always without ceasing even for a single second from the moment man is born until his death. Look at the eyes of the body. They are the windows of the mind. Man sees with his eyes and thinks with his soul on what he observes. The eyes of man often reveal his character. A drunkard, a vicious man, a cunning man, a lover, a hater, are all known by their eyes. As Emerson writes: 'The reason why men do not obey us is because they see the mud at the bottom of our eye.' Bright eyes show that their possessor is a man of clean life.

Such being the value of the body to man, his first duty is to devote proper care to its growth and upkeep, by observing the laws which govern its health. Even a man born weak and sickly can become strong and healthy by care of the body. Isaac Newton, who discovered the law of gravitation, was a very weak child; but by a life of temperance and clean mode of life, he lived to be eighty-five. Our Indian *rishis*, who composed the *Vedas* and gave us laws, philosophy, poetry and all the arts and graces of humanity, lived to an old age, eighty or one hundred years, because, says the sage Yajnyavalkya, they took care of the body by due regard to the laws of its health and holiness. Nowadays in India, when a man attains the age of forty we say he is old! Not so in old times. Old age then meant eighty years of age. *Be old when young that you may be young when old*, says a proverb. That is the key to a healthy long life. It means that a youth who leads a pure life by keeping his body fit has the sure chance of not only living long, but also of feeling young, active, lively, when old. A man, it is said, is as old as he feels. Men of twenty, or thirty, or forty years of age feel old prematurely because they have neglected the care of their bodies and trifled with life. They find life a misery. A sound body cannot be acquired unless proper care is taken of it by due regard to certain rules prescribed by Nature.

CHAPTER III

HEALTH

In a lecture delivered some years ago on Moral Education, Prof. Darrock, holding the Chair of Education at Edinburgh University, pointed out that the first condition for all healthy moral activity is sound physical health. Morality is unity of character. In the words of Lord Morley, it is a life united in all its parts by self-control. Our ancient *rishis* laid down the rule that a man's first duty is to govern his own self to be able to govern others. They insisted that man should conquer and bring under the subjection of his reason the organs of his body. This self-conquest is called in Sanskrit *dama*; the man who has attained it is *danta*, self-controlled. 'Self-control,' say the Hindu sages, 'will place a man among the gods.' Likewise, Mahomed defined a true Moslem as one who has conquered his own self—i.e. his own body. Control of the body means disciplining it according to the rules of health. Freedom, the right of every human being, is not license to do as one likes but to do what is good and proper. 'The first symptom of a really free man is not that he resists the laws of the Universe, but that he obeys them.' A man who does not obey the laws of the body becomes its slave. The body is given to be used, not to be abused. It is like a machine; it must be kept fit to be going well, or else, like the machine, it is apt to get out of gear.

It is true that obedience to the laws of health, which requires self-control, is irksome. To live by rule and

practice morality requires resolution, which is not easy. It calls for exertion. Hence so many indulge their bodies and suffer. But there can be no gain without pain. As is observed in the *Bhagavad Gita*, what seems sweet at first proves poison at last; what seems poison at first becomes nectar in the end. That is exactly the case with the laws of the body and the rules of health.

Those rules require that the body should be kept healthy by due attention to cleanliness, food, exercise and rest. Regularity and moderation are the essential conditions of health. Regularity means routine, doing a thing daily at a fixed time. The human body refuses to work well when we have trifled with it by a loose, disordered and irregular mode of life, as to food, sleep, work and rest. Some people suppose that a life of routine or regularity in observing the laws of health as to diet, work recreation, sleep and other duties of life is slavery. But regularity and routine lead to a well-ordered life and, as aptly observed by Amiel, a French philosopher in his *Journal*, 'It is the lack of order which makes us slaves; the confusion of to-day discounts the freedom of to-morrow.' How many Indians of great promise at school or college have become decrepit or died prematurely for want of due attention to the rules of health! I have known men, who were physically strong in youth but who lived irregularly, and either died early or became diseased before they were twenty-five or thirty. I have known others, who were physically weak when young, but who by regularity and moderation built up their bodies and lived to a good old age as active men.

I have not come across a better way of cultivating the body and caring for it than that pointed out in a verse

in the *Bhagavad Gita*. That verse, rendered into English, reads thus: '*Yoga* (concentration of mind) is impossible to him who either eats too much or starves; who either sleeps or keeps awake to excess. Concentration is possible only to him who is temperate in his food and pleasures, who is sober in his actions, and moderate in his sleep and waking.'

Jnyaneshwara says: 'He, who is a slave to his tongue or sleep, or who through perversity kills his hunger and thirst and eats less than his body requires for health, or who hates and avoids sleep altogether, is unfit for *Yoga* (concentration of mind). Therefore, do not be either a slave to the appetites of your body or an enemy of them. Be temperate, that is to say, serve the body with food but measure it by moderation. So also measure all your actions by sobriety. When you speak, let your speech be measured; when you take exercise, such as walking, do not overdo it. Pay respect to sleep by going to bed at a fixed hour. Have a fixed time daily for waking and for work; but do not overwork yourself. If you regulate your life in this way, your body will become balanced in strength, and your happiness of mind will increase.

In an address to students at Glasgow, Carlyle advised them to remember that the word *health* is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word *haelig* which means *holy*, *whole*; and *whole* means the different parts of man's constitution so united and held together as to make him fit and sound. Man is made of body, mind and soul. Each depends for its strength on the others. All three form together one whole. The body must be kept fit or else the mind suffers. When the body and mind are healthy, the soul is able to develop personality. The ancient

Greeks put this thought into the saying, *a sound mind in a sound body.* They had games at which men who excelled in gymnastics of the body competed for prizes; every competitor made it a point to live a temperate life in point of food, sleep and work as an essential condition of winning the prizes. St. Paul said, 'Every man that striveth for mastery is temperate.' By 'temperate' he explains: 'I keep under my body and bring it into subjection.'

When we say that the body is best brought into subjection by temperance we mean by moderation and regularity in food, in sleep, in work, in play and exercise. 'Order,' says the poet, 'is Heaven's first law.' Witness how God regulates the world. The sun rises and sets daily at a fixed hour; the seasons follow one another at stated periods. Even the lower animals observe regular hours of life. For instance, a farmer in England was brought before a magistrate a short time ago and charged under the law with the offence of selling milk which was not of the quality required under that law. The farmer's defence to the charge was that he sold the milk exactly as it came from his cows and that, therefore, he had done nothing to spoil its quality. The magistrate on enquiry found that the milk lost its quality the moment it was drawn from the cow because of the irregular hours of milking. When the cows used to be milked at regular intervals the milk they gave was good. But when the cows were milked at irregular intervals, the milk suffered in quality. A famous Venetian wrote in his '*Discourses on a Sober and Temperate Life*' that melancholy, hatred, and other violent passions, which have the greatest influence on our bodies, can have no great power over the body and, therefore, they can do

but little harm, when the body is governed by temperance and regularity in food and drink. 'Such regularity,' he says, 'keeps the humours of the body clean and temperate; it suffers no vapours to ascend from the stomach to the head. Hence the brain of him who lives in that manner enjoys such a constant serenity that he is always perfectly master of himself.'

This is the way to obtain health and to avoid sickness. Sickness, it is true, cannot be avoided always; but by a wise discipline of the body, it can be prevented. Prevention, says the proverb, is better than cure. Due attention to the laws of health gives the body what is called the power of reserve—the power not only to resist sickness but to fight against it, when it attacks us, with that deposit of strength which we have to our credit in the bank of health, ready to be drawn for use in times of need.

CHAPTER VI

SICKNESS

When a student is advised to take care of his body he should be warned against the danger of that care passing into excessive anxiety about his health and habits. Such anxiety goes by the name of worry. Worry is waste. In an essay in the *Spectator*, Addison writes of a man who every moment tried to find out whether he was healthy. Whether he ate, slept or took exercise, he weighed himself, felt his pulse, and examined his tongue to find out whether his body had gained or lost in weight. By this regimen he lost health, and fell constantly ill. In short, he became a person of a sickly constitution, and in seeking to recover health by constant anxiety about it fell as constantly ill.

In actual life we come across persons who by incessant anxiety bring on themselves the very disease they seek to avoid. Aristotle, an ancient Greek philosopher, made a special study of indigestion and contracted that disease and died of it. Airsen made a special study of disease of the heart and died of it. The special study was not by itself the cause of death of these men, but it was the anxiety as to whether they had the disease, which they were investigating, that led to the evil result. This anxiety illustrates a law of the body discovered by Holland, a medical man. It is called after him Holland's law, which is that 'whenever attention is directed specially to any one organ of the body, the action of that organ is more or less disturbed.' The symptoms of

sickness grow with anxious thought of it. For instance, if you try to feel your pulse, after a time, in your anxiety to know whether it is beating properly, you find that it gives more beats than it should. Go to bed and keep on asking yourself the question whether you will sleep well, and you will find you do not sleep at all.

Sickness is Nature's attempt to throw out some poison, which has gone into our body either because we have disregarded the rules of temperance in food, sleep, rest and exercise and as to pure air, or because we have, in observing those rules vexed our minds and weakened our nerves so much that the disease we fear has been able to take hold of us. The science of medicine teaches that in our body there are two kinds of germs—those which try to protect us and those which try to kill us. The former are, so to speak, our guardian angels; the latter are our enemies. If you wish to be healthy, help the friendly germs; if you mean to court illness, neglect them and assist the enemy to destroy them and you with them.

If sickness is Nature's effort to save man by throwing out the poison which has gone into his body and killing the bad germs, Nature is herself our healer; and the object of giving medicine to a sick man is merely to assist Nature. Medical men, therefore, have now come to the conviction that drugs administered as medicine in sickness can do little towards recovery unless the patient has good nursing, patience, and the belief that he is going to get well. Drugs and doctors can achieve little unless they are assisted by the faith and discipline of the patient himself.

With all our progress in civilization, researches into the science of medicine and increase in the number of

doctors, why is it that epidemics still occur and men die before their time in large numbers? Consumption, fevers, plague, cholera, influenza—what a toll these still take! It is because of the crowded and congested character of towns and cities, of dirt and want of pure water in villages, of luxurious living, of sedentary habits. In short, because men disregard the laws of Nature and forget that prevention of disease is better than its cure, the number of diseases increases.

A medical man has pointed out recently that the last war in Europe has thrown fresh light on sickness and disease. He says that some years ago disease was supposed generally to be a fixed and certain thing like a table or a chair. During and after the war, however, it was found that a majority of young men who had all the symptoms of heart disease, or other complaints, recovered when placed in healthy and happy surroundings. In short, the best insurance against sickness consists in regular hours for food, sleep, work and rest, moderation in eating and drinking, cheerfulness of mind, freedom from worry, proper exercise of the body, avoidance of hot things like chillies and of intoxicating drugs, and life in the open air, and amid clean surroundings.

CHAPTER V

EXERCISE AND PLAY

STUDENTS are familiar with the proverb that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. Another way of putting the same idea is that one who devotes himself wholly to study and books and finds no time for recreation and exercise will find plenty of time to be sick and weaken his brain and body. The daily routine of life prescribed for a student by the religious books of the Hindus enjoined bodily exercise for him as part of his religious observances and daily ablutions. Yet in India not only have many young men of promise but even many elderly persons become either permanently weak and incapable of work, or have met with premature death because they neglected exercise and did not cultivate the art of rest and recreation in their youth.

A machine becomes useless if it is worked always without regular intervals of rest. The body of man is like a machine, and to keep it fit and reliable it must be strengthened by rest. Exercise is not only one kind of rest but the most important kind. In a previous chapter I drew attention to the simile of the *Bhagavad Gita* comparing the human body to a field. Watch a peasant cultivating his farm. He ploughs and furrows it, and then casts in good seed. Then the peasant after having so toiled rests. The seed by Nature's process grows into corn and yields harvest. Similarly, the time devoted by a student to study and work is like the seed-time of the peasant. The time devoted to rest and exercise is his

harvest time. It is a totally wrong idea that a man can turn out good work by applying himself to it at the expense of his body. The mind soon gets tired if work and study are not varied with rest and recreation Recreation, which means rest from work, means literally creating again and again. If a man goes on always using his mind for serious thought and work, without giving it rest, it ceases sooner or later to work properly. If, on the other hand, he works with his mind during stated hours and rests it by exercise of the body in the open air, he recuperates himself and it. Why is it that when we have applied our mind for some hours to some serious study, the mind grows tired and craves for rest, and refuses to work longer? Why is it that when a student tries to concentrate his mind upon some subject of study, his mind at once begins to wander? Sri Jnyaneshwara explains the cause of it. He says: 'God has created man both for work and for rest. What we call a wandering mind is merely a sign of its natural craving for rest. To rest after work is the privilege of man.' Rest contributes to man's happiness, when allied to work. Rest does not mean allowing the mind to be vacant. In the words of the poet Cowper :—

> Absence of occupation is not rest;
> A mind quite vacant is a mind distress'd.

Rest means so using the body as to give pleasure to the mind proceeding from variety of occupation or work. And exercise in the open air is also work like study.

A student should therefore cultivate the habit of daily exercise either in the morning or in the evening. Such exercise may be either a walk or sports, such as cricket, hockey, lawn-tennis, or other games, which bring the

organs of the body into play and strengthen the brain and muscle.

How exhilarating is a quiet walk in the open fields, or meadows, or along a sea-shore or river! How healthy and happy it makes one to roam there, watching the morning sun as he comes out like a bridegroom out of the chambers of Heaven and bathes the world with his golden rays! How refreshing it is to watch the sun-set colours of the sky. There are people who say a walk without a companion to talk to is dull. But even if one has no companion in a walk, one has the whole of Nature and its sounds and sights—the sky, the trees, birds and so forth—to be companions, if one will but use them with one's eyes and ears. They delight, never tire; they elevate our minds and humanize our hearts.

A young student should prefer the exercise of sports to that of a mere walk, because sports not only make and keep the body fit but they also contribute to a sportsmanlike spirit, which consists in the power of union, of the subordination of one's own self to the ends of the sport, of the discipline of self-control and fair play. Hence the proverb: *Play the game. To play the game* is to have the courage of truth, of patience, and of justice to others, to be able to smile and not whine and fret and not to make yourself miserable in face of defeat or difficulties. What if you fail in a game of cricket or lawn-tennis, or football? If you win you have gained your object. If you fail, though you have lost the game, you have by playing exercised your mind and body and acquired the virtues of a personality—patience, courage, the spirit of fair play, and health. That is the virtue derived from sports—and what a blessing it is for a student to possess in life the capacity to endure defeat with a smile and never to say *fail!*

CHAPTER VI

INFLUENCE OF MIND ON BODY

THE body has influence on the mind; the mind has even greater influence over the body. Take care of the body by formation of the good habits pointed out in previous chapters, never worry but think you are healthy; then health is yours. On the other hand, let your mind constantly fret about health, and health runs away from you and you become melancholy.

I have heard pious and venerable Hindu mothers tell their children a story as an instance of the power exercised by the mind over the body. A certain man, who was in good health but was of a suspicious habit of mind, was once having his meal at night, when the shadow of a lizard, crawling overhead on the ceiling of the room where he was eating, fell on his food. Just as he put a morsel into his mouth he thought the lizard itself had fallen into the food and that he had swallowed it with the food. As a matter of fact, it was only the shadow which the eater mistook for the lizard itself. He became ill; he wasted in body; no medicine could cure him because the disease of the body was caused by the disease of the mind. At last a shrewd fellow, who saw the cause of the man's illness, undertook to cure him. 'Yes,' he said to the man, 'the lizard did get into your food and you have eaten it. I will give you an emetic which will bring out the lizard from your stomach; and you will be all right.' The man took the emetic and was soon quite well, because his mind was freed from the

thought which had taken hold of him and led to his bodily ailment.

There is a similar story told of Carlyle. He was a man of disturbed nerves and used to pass sleepless nights. He thought his sleep was disturbed by the crowing of a cock belonging to his next-door neighbour. So he called the neighbour one day and said : 'Your cock crows the whole night and makes me sleepless. Please stop the crowing.' 'But, Sir,' replied the neighbour, 'my cock crows only three or four times at night; not the whole night.' Carlyle rejoined: 'That may be; but if you only knew what I suffer waiting for the cock to crow!' What Carlyle meant was that it was not the crowing but the incessant fear of his mind that the cock might crow that kept him awake. How often we find that just when we come to our food with a keen appetite, we perhaps hear some bad news, or something happens to excite our anger, and our appetite is lost and the food becomes distasteful!

All, therefore, depends on the proper control of the mind. Conquer your mind and you conquer all.

How this can be done is best pointed out by some of our Hindu writers. Sri Jnyaneshwara describes the discourse between Sri Krishna and Arjuna about the power of the mind in these words: Sri Krishna observes, 'Yes, Arjuna, the mind is unsteady. When you try to fix it on one thing, it escapes and runs to another. But have you noticed that, if it is a natural weakness of the mind to wander, it has a natural strength also? If, every time it wanders, you persist in bringing it back to its first object, and try that again and again, the mind soon learns to fix itself on that object and learns to be steady.' Another writer says: 'Just as diamond can be cut by

diamond alone, so the mind must be controlled by the mind itself. The mind is its own light and its own strength. Therefore, do not try to conquer the mind by making an enemy of it. Conquer it by making a friend of it and so render it happy.'

How are you to conquer the mind by making a friend and not an enemy of it? It can best be done by adopting what a Christian preacher, Dr. Chalmers, called 'the expulsive power of a new affection.' What is that power? It is best described by a story from a personal experience of Dr. Chalmers himself. One day he was being driven in a dog-cart drawn by a pony to a village where he had to preach. The pony trotted briskly, yet when the dog-cart approached a white gate-post, the driver gave the pony a sharp cut with his whip. Dr. Chalmers asked the driver: 'Why do you whip the pony unnecessarily when it is trotting briskly?' The driver answered: 'The pony has a habit of shying at that white gate-post. So whenever we get near it, I give him a touch with the whip just to give him something else to think about.' That is to say, the driver drew off the mind of the pony from the white gate-post to the whip and so the pony's mind expelled its old fear of the post for the new fear of the whip. The pony did not shy but continued to trot as briskly as before.

Similarly, when you apply your mind to any study, and your mind wanders, whip it and draw it away from wandering and bring it back to your object. That is how Newton said he discovered the law of gravitation by constantly forcing his mind to brood over it. Our ancient *Rishis* called such constant brooding *tapas*, i.e. concentration. 'By concentration,' says Manu, 'all science has been discovered, and without it there is no

true knowledge. Therefore if you apply your mind to any study, do not allow it to wander, but bring it back to its object. Thus alone can you obtain steadiness and usefulness of thought.'

CHAPTER VII

TEMPERANCE

THE word 'Temperance,' which properly means moderation or restraint in all things, is used popularly to mean moderation in the use of spirituous or alcoholic drinks. This kind of Temperance has been commanded by all the religions of the world. The ancient religious teachers of India regarded the use of alcohol as a crime; the Mahomedan religion forbids the use of spirituous liquors; and Solomon, in the proverbs, speaks of wine as a mocker, 'whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise'.

The great majority of medical men in all countries now believe that alcohol should be used chiefly, if not entirely, as a medicine, and that if alcoholic drinks are needed for the preservation of health, only so much as is absolutely necessary should be used. Alcohol should be used only when necessary, and not for enjoyment. Taken in excess it is harmful. Great leaders of men, such as the late Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, have proved by experience that the best work of all kinds is done by men who are not merely temperate, but who abstain entirely from alcohol. Explorers, like Nansen, have proved that those men can best endure the hardships of cold and hunger who drink no spirituous liquor. Be that as it may, and even if alcohol may sometimes be useful as a medicine in cold countries, it is certain that in a country like India, it is not only unnecessary, but positively harmful.

Moderation in the use of spirituous drinks and other intoxicating substances tempts a man to excess, because their intoxicating effect gains slowly upon him; and, as he goes on using them, he wants more, until enslaved by the habit, he becomes a prey to it. Other drinks such as tea and coffee, which are becoming common in India, are also harmful to health, if not used in moderation. They retard digestion, disturb sleep, and weaken the nerves. Students, who have indulged in excessive use of tea and coffee to help them to sit late at night for study, have suffered for it. So also smoking. It may be a harmless habit when indulged in moderation by grown-up men; but in the case of youth it is positively mischievous. It spoils the teeth, which are so essential to digestion. It weakens the eye-sight. It makes the hand shake when writing. Hence it is that several countries have enacted laws to prevent juvenile smoking, and smoking by the young is made punishable as an offence. That is because the health and bodily growth of the young is so important to their country's future. 'An age touched by the spirit of hope inevitably turns to the young, for with the young lies fulfilment.' So writes Lord Morley.

The virtue of temperance applies to the whole of life. To be temperate in all things is to do nothing in excess. Everything should be done in measure, order, and proportion. 'Too much freedom is licence; too much exercise is waste; too much zeal is fanaticism; too much light is blindness.' This was the fundamental note of all Greek life. St. Paul puts that conception of temperance in these words: 'All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Use

this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away. Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. I, therefore, so run, not as uncertainly; so fight, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body and bring it into subjection lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.' The virtue of temperance extends even to the art of writing and speaking. He who writes a letter, or a book, or any essay, loose and lengthy, without any unity of matter and manner, and says more than the subject and the occasion require, is said to be intemperate of style. True literary art consists in mastery over the subject and measured words. It is called intellectual temperance. The same applies to speech. He who allows his tongue to run riot, instead of controlling it, makes for mischief. St. James says, 'If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.' And he instances the case of horses. 'We put bits in the horses' mouths that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which, though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing.' So the tongue, he advises, should be bridled, i.e. tamed by temperance of the whole body.

In what does temperance of the body consist? That is well explained in a letter of advice which Sir Philip

Sydney received from his father when he was a boy at school. The letter read as follows :—

'Let your first action be the lifting up of your mind to Almighty God by hearty prayer ; and feelingly digest the words you utter in prayer. Mark the sense and matter of what you read as well as the words ; so shall you both enrich your tongue with words and with it your matter, and judgment will grow as years grow in you. Be humble and obedient, for unless you frame yourself to obey others, yea, and feel in yourself what obedience is, you will never be able to teach others how to obey you. Be courteous of gesture and affable to all men. Give yourself to be merry ; but let your mirth ever be void of biting words to any man, for a wound given by a word is oftentimes harder to be cured than that which is given by a sword. Let never oath be heard to come out of your mouth, nor word of ribaldry ; detest it in others ; so shall custom make to yourself a law against it in yourself. Be modest and rather be rebuked of light fellows for maiden shamefacedness than of your sad friends for pert boldness. Think upon every word that you will speak before you utter it and remember how nature hath ramparted up, as it were, the tongue with teeth, lips, and hair, all betokening reins and bridles for the loose use of that member. Above all things, speak no untruth, no, not in trifles. There can be no greater reproach to a gentleman than to be accounted a liar.'

Temperance of body is the parent of all virtue ; it is the root of all morality.

CHAPTER VIII

PURITY OF BODY

The care for the body lies in purity. Boys at school are taught a proverb which says *Cleanliness is next to Godliness*. The precious virtue of cleanliness has been held to be the root of all personal duties in all the ages of civilized man. The ancient Greeks, who bestowed much care on the body, regarded it as a half-virtue without which complete virtue was impossible. The ceremony of baptism with water among Christians; the washing of the hands and feet and face with water before prayer by Mahomedans; the bathing and wearing of a clean cloth before worshipping or taking food by Hindus—all these customs show how these great religions value cleanliness of body as necessary to godliness of mind.

One of the supreme beauties of Hinduism is its insistence on cleanliness of the body.. Its rules, shortly stated, are: A man should rise from sleep early in the morning, when it is twilight, because it is the best hour of God, *Brahma Muhurta*, when the angels drink nectar. It is then more than at any other hour that man, rising fresh from sleep, can gather up his thoughts, and steady himself to get ready for the work and worry of the day before him. He should, so rising, answer the calls of Nature regularly, because by observing that daily regularity at that hour, he gets rid of all fœtid matter from his body and becomes clean of constitution. Students suffer from diseases of the bowels, particularly

constipation, not only because they are not particular as to what, how, and when they eat, but as to the time of cleaning the bowels. Having answered the calls of Nature, he should next wash his face and clean his teeth. Hinduism is very particular as to the cleaning of the teeth. It has a hymn addressed to the twigs of trees which are used as a tooth brush. Says that hymn: 'Oh twig! Give me long life, strength, success, light, intelligence, children, cattle, a knowledge of the Universe, wisdom and insight.' What is this invocation intended to signify? It signifies what medical science teaches us that the health of the body depends primarily on digestion of food which is promoted by a proper mastication of what we eat by the teeth. The late Mr. W. E. Gladstone, a statesman and orator, was remarkable for his health, strength and power of work. It is said that his health, long life, and capacity for industry, were owing to the fact that he 'counted his bites' when he ate his food. In other words, he used his teeth well at meals and ate slowly, chewing his food with great care. An old Parsi gentleman, who lived a long vigorous life, once advised me to solidify the liquids I drank and liquefy the solids I ate. So much for the care and proper use of teeth. The next act of purification is bathing. The whole body must be washed daily because 'to bathe is to perform an act of religious merit'. 'The wise ever bathe'—so sang Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion.

The emphasis laid by the *Shastras* upon the cleanliness of the body and place for devotion shows that our health, our enjoyment of life, and our capacity for work, depend upon cleanliness. The benefits of such cleanliness are described by Sri Jnyaneshwara thus: 'The

body, so purified, gains the glorious colours of the sunset sky. ·Old age flies, the sight becomes clear as in youth, and the charms of childhood return. A man who lives clean like this seems young in appearance but his cleanliness gives him the power of manhood. He acquires incomparable courage. The nails of his fingers and feet shine fresh like the tree of gold ; his teeth brighten like pearls; his hairs become like rubies ; the palms of his hands and feet look like lotuses; his eyes gain lustre as if his vision, not fading before the obstruction of the eye-lashes, leaps forward and ranges as far as the sky. In short, cleanliness of body leading to godliness gives the body the glory of gold.'

CHAPTER IX

POSTURE AND POISE OF THE BODY

One of the common defects of a student is said to be that he does not know how to balance his body healthily in action, speech, or sleep. If he is sitting in his class with his fellow-students, or in company for conversation, or by himself for study, his body is constantly moving, his eyes wander. If he is walking, he seems to run as if some ghost is after him; his steps are so unsteady. If he sleeps, he draws together certain parts of his body—his neck, hands and feet—so tight that it looks as if he is chaining himself to a post. If he is talking, he speaks loudly and wears the expression of excitement, be it joy or sorrow or depression, on his face. Students, who treat their bodies in this careless way, are wearing it out and sowing the seeds of ill health.

A proper posture of the body is so essential that neglect of it is one of the causes of life's waste and failure. All the great religions of the world enjoin a fitting posture and gesture of the body in acts of worship. In a previous chapter I have pointed out how the *Bhagavad Gita* requires a devotee to choose a clean place for meditation, and to adopt a certain attitude of body to realize the presence of God. The Hindu religion says that worship means turning the face from outward things to the inward soul in man—hence a Hindu in a state of worship shuts his eyes, bows his head, folds his hands, and prostrates himself before the Deity. Christians bow down and kneel in church. Mahomedans, whether in a

mosque or outside, say their prayers first standing, then kneeling, then standing with their eyes turned upwards to Heaven, and their hands folded.

Worship means worth-ship, the condition of making ourselves worthy of a power not only higher than ourselves but the highest that we can think of, adore, love, and make our own by trying to become like it. All study and education are, therefore, worship—preparing the youth to be worthy of the highest. If worship requires a certain attitude of posture of the body, so do study and education. But not only in worship and study should we endeavour to control our bodies. In all our actions our bearing should be upright and frank and manly, so that our uprightness of body may be a sign of uprightness of mind.

A familiar sight of correct bearing is that of the soldier, whether marching in line with his regiment or standing upright and steady on duty. When he marches, he walks erect, head and chin held aloft and steady, face calm and courageous, and feet moving with rhythmic steps. His whole motion has the harmony of music. Another familiar example in India is that of women in villages carrying two or three pots of water on their heads, well-balanced, and steady, and walking home from the village wells with grace in their steps and calm in their eyes, all the while talking to one another in soft accents without the least expression of hurry or excitement in the movement of their bodies. This sight, so familiar in India, has led some Indian poets to counsel all persons to imitate it as the best example of poise of the body leading to dignity of behaviour, peace of mind, and elevation of the soul.

Learn, then, to poise the body. When you adopt a sitting posture, sit upright and steady, and look straight;

give up looking here and there, twitching your fingers, and twisting the body. When you are speaking, do not shut your eyes, move your hands, make grimaces and gestures, but speak without excitement in a tone well-modulated and suited to the occasion and place. In sleep, let your body be stretched at full length, let all your limbs lie easy. In all your movements let the dignity of your body be a symbol of the dignity and calm of your mind.

CHAPTER X

THE POWER OF THOUGHT

MAN is made of body, mind and spirit. These together form his nature and contribute to his growth. Browning says that man is a mixture or composition of three souls. These are, *what does*, *what knows*, and *what is*. *What does* is his body, because by it he performs his actions. *What knows* is his mind, because by his mind he acquires knowledge and thinks. *What is* is his soul, because the soul is man's being, his eternal spirit, God in his heart. Therefore, the poet describes it as *what is*, i.e. that soul or spirit in man which never dies and therefore always *is*. These three respectively correspond to the *Karma Marga* or path of action, the *Jnana Marga* or the path of knowledge, and the *Bhakti Marga* or the path of devotion to God, which are described in the *Bhagavad Gita*. These three powers of man are allied to one another, though the function of each is separate. His body makes man an animal; his mind makes him human; his spirit makes him divine. One cannot act rightly without knowing what is right. To know what is right, man must think by his intellect. Man, unlike the lower animals, has the power of thought. His mind is creative. He observes things; collects facts; sees and hears and reads; and then forms his own opinion, constructs his own theory and writes books, forms Government, discovers science. In short, man makes a new world of his own. And he creates by his thoughts and deeds a world of goodness, beauty, and truth, because he has the spirit of God in him.

To know is not the same as *to think*. To know is merely to acquire information by the mind from without. To think means to judge, to find out whether what the mind has observed is good or bad, right or wrong, true or false. To think is to create something new for yourself by the power of your mind as the result of the knowledge acquired. When a student fills his mind with knowledge from what others have written or spoken and does not think for himself on it, that is to say, when he does not by the force of his own thought judge and decide whether what others have written or spoken is right or wrong, true or false, he is said to cram, not to learn. He is like a man who has swallowed food but has not digested it; he does not turn that food into flesh and blood so as to nourish and strengthen his body and become healthy. What physical exercise is to the body the exercise of the power to think is to the mind. 'A wise man does not merely read the *Vedas*; but he thinks on what he reads, he examines what they have said, he judges for himself and then accepts from them what he thinks is proper as being sound and true for all times.' In other words, think and find out for yourself what is good. Do not follow blindly what others have said or written.

The power of thought is best exercised and strengthened by silent communion with one's own self in quiet, undisturbed by noise and distraction. Shakespeare calls such communion 'the sweet session of silent thought'. You know the verse in the *Bhagavad Gita* which says 'the man who can control himself sees light in darkness; the wise man who is silent sees darkness where others suppose they see light.' The true thinker is he who, like the astronomer who discovers the truth about the stars

in the sky during the darkness of night retires into the deep recesses of his own mind and finds the truth of things by his own reflection.

It is said of Southey, author of the *Life of Nelson* that one day he told a friend of his what a busy man he was, having all his hours occupied with either writing, reading, or other work, which kept him busy throughout the day, and left no time for rest. The friend, after quietly listening, asked: 'Mr. Southey, when then do you find time to think?' That is a pertinent question for all of us in these days of haste and hustle. The ancient *Rishis*, says *Manu*, turned out immortal works of wisdom like the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, by means of long hours of deep thought in quiet and solitude.

The power to think depends on the power to retire into ourselves. Solitude is said to be the sweetest society, because it is there that we discover ourselves and find our own capacity to form our own judgment on the business of life and all that we hear and see. The daily habit of sitting, say for half an hour, quietly, away from noise and the haunts of men, and thinking calmly on some subject selected for the exercise of thought is sure to make of you, after steadily pursued practice, a clear and deep thinker. If what you have thought out on that subject during that half-hour you commit to writing in your own words, your thinking faculty will develop so as to make you a facile thinker on any subject on which you may be called to offer your opinion. Only remember to think for yourself and be not a slave of other people's thoughts.

The way to cultivate decision is to practise the habit of silent thought. Want of decision arises from confusion

of mind. You must clear the mind of all distraction to be able to think clearly and decide rightly. One hour spent daily in silent meditation strengthens all the powers of mind. It makes you 'fervent, not feverish; energetic, not excited; resolute, not rash.' That is why a man who goes into silence and prays daily and contemplates God becomes fearless, never in doubt as to what he should say and decide.

'Fervent prayer is the cure of care' i.e., of fear and doubt which are the enemies of decision. The reason why we hesitate to decide when we ought to be decisive is very often that we are inwardly divided against ourselves, that is to say, our minds are restless. Have you noticed the wheels of a cart or carriage in motion? The rim of the wheel moves on but the centre of the wheel called the axis remains motionless. Find the centre of your being which is the inner self; retire into it daily and you get inward peace and inward might.

CHAPTER XI

THE TRAINING OF THOUGHT

In a book called '*The Revelation*,' which forms a part of the Bible, St. John says that an angel appeared to him with a book in his hand. St. John went up to the Angel and said: 'Give me the book.' The Angel gave it and said to St. John: 'Eat it and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.' St. John ate the book, and found it bitter in his belly but sweet in his mouth. The Angel then informed St. John that the eating of the book had made him stronger than before as a prophet, i.e. a preacher of God, and that he must 'prophesy again before many people, and nations, and tongues, and kings.'

The moral of this story is that the books which you study will not develop your mind and character, your power to think clearly and to act rightly, unless you eat them, that is to say, unless you digest their substance as you digest the food you eat by careful and thorough mastication.

When you read a book, you must approach it with faith in yourself and in the book if you are determined to get some instruction from it and become a better man in thought and action. Books inform the mind and inspire thought only when studied with this faith. Mr. Gladstone became a great orator because, when a student at school and college, he had acquired by steady application and the economy of time the habit of close attention to and study of whatever he read. This habit he

has described in his own words as follows: 'My method has usually been (1) to read over regularly, (2) to glance again over all I have read and analyse,' and throughout his life he kept to the habit of systematic reading and thinking for a good many hours daily.

There is a story told of a man, to whom, when he returned home one evening after office hours, his little child came with a piece of paper and said: 'See, Papa, how I have written the letter A on this paper!' The father saw the child's writing on the paper; it was but a scrawl, an effort of the child to learn to write the first letter of the alphabet. The father then turned the paper over and found that that side was spoilt by blots of ink on it. The child said to the father: 'Never mind the blots, Papa.' The father was struck with the child's wisdom. It had taught him a lesson so useful in life—to see beauty in life and leave ugliness alone is to make ourselves beautiful. So the father gained the knowledge even from his little child's faith that all things are beautiful if our minds are beautiful and that only ugly minds see ugliness everywhere.

To read a book with faith, read it with humility, not in a carping spirit.

Books help deep thought only when they are read with the faith of humility and with care. But mere reading in that way will not do. You must find out whether you have mastered the book and imbibed its atmosphere of thought. To do this you must close the book after you have done reading it, and then write out in your own words a summary of what you have read, and your own reflections on the thoughts in the book. Such writing gives precision of thought and language, it makes you what Bacon calls an exact man. It is a fault of many

students that they do not practise such writing as often as they ought. The result is that, when they appear for an examination, they take time to put in writing what they have read and they fail for want of practice in writing out what they have read and digested. Writing tests your reading; it discovers whether your mind has clearly grasped what you have read. It is by writing that one learns: 'It is by pumping that one draws water into a well,' says Amiel.

The writing must next be followed up by conversation with others on the subject-matter treated in the book, because, while writing makes you an exact thinker, conversation makes you a ready thinker.

A man who has mastered one good book in this way—by careful reading, by exact writing, and by conversation and discussion with others about its contents and thoughts—is more than a match to one who has hastily read or lightly studied a hundred books. This process is no doubt wearisome; it requires immense practice and steadiness. It means eating the book and finding it at first bitter in the belly; but persevered in, it yields the honey of a mind strong in its thinking. Patience becomes a power. The mind finds it very easy afterwards to read and understand without difficulty other books; and deep thought becomes a habit. But it is not only by books that we should train our minds. We all know that children, as a rule, are very inquisitive. They want to know why a thing is this and why a thing is that. They trouble their parents or relations with questions about all they see. A child is sensitive not merely to sights but also to sounds. It wishes to appropriate to itself whatever object pleases it. This spirit of curiosity, which is more active in children than in

grown-up men, and by means of which a child learns to be pleased with some objects and pained by others, shows that we must from our childhood upwards cultivate that spirit wisely and not neglect it or suppress it.

Like the child we must develop our powers of observation by training our eyes and ears and through them our minds and feelings. Shakespeare read *Plutarch's Lives*, made them his own, walked down streets, saw objects, talked to the men and women he saw. By the force of his own thought he turned all he had read, seen, or heard into his own objects and wrote those plays which have made his name immortal. Carlyle read five hundred volumes including 'the reports of officers, generals, statesmen, spies, heroes, villains'. He then journeyed to Scotland. There he thought quietly over all he had read or seen or heard; he made it all his own and produced his great work '*The French Revolution*'. Gladstone collected dry and dull figures and statistics. By the force of his own mind he arranged them in order, and in a speech, which was listened to with rapt attention in the House of Commons in 1853, he made the dry figures interesting. How was that? Because he had appropriated to himself those figures. In themselves they were dull, but he poured his mind, his soul, into them; he made them his own; he put life into them and they in his hands unfolded a tale and a moral. The biographies of great men show how they made their own whatever they saw, and by the light of their own observation made the world better than they found it.

To be able to do that you must be what a poet calls 'a sensitive being', meaning, a careful observer of objects that please and objects that pain. All the difference between a careful student and a careless student

lies in the use by each of his eyes and ears. Having eyes to see, we do not see properly, and, therefore, we are as the blind. Having ears to hear, we do not listen, and we are as the deaf.

The world which we see around us has a mind and a soul just as we have. Nature with all its objects speaks to man by signs. Nature says to Man: 'Ask; seek pleasure from me; question me; make friends of me and I will reveal my secrets to you.' That is what the Hindu Saint Tukaram meant when he sang in one of his hymns that God is silent but speaks to us by His very silence.

Cultivate it now when you are young, and you will not fail to improve yourself and improve the world about you.

CHAPTER XII

THE EVILS OF LOOSE THINKING

Loose thinking comes from careless living. It is because we are not true to ourselves, that we become slovenly in thought. No one can be true to himself unless he is sincere. The saying that *the style is the man* means that a man's speech and writing which express his thought show the kind of man he is. One way to be sincere is to express your thoughts truly in words the meaning of which cannot be mistaken. That is not possible if you use your words loosely, or if you strain after a fine word where a simpler word will do and express your meaning quite as well. Loose thought then arises from a careless mode of life making one slovenly in regard to the accurate use of words. How often we use words without troubling to find out their real meaning! Every word stands for some real thing actually existing in the world. When, therefore, we use a word, we must ask ourselves the question: What actual fact or thing does it represent? Does it represent that thing truly? That was what Socrates spent his life in teaching his pupils. For instance, he took such words as 'Justice,' 'Liberty' and, by the cross-examination of those who used the words carelessly, proved how confused their thoughts were because they had never taken the trouble to study the real meaning of words. He held that 'to use words wrongly and indefinitely is not only an error in itself; it also creates a lie in the soul.' Mark the words: 'a lie in the soul'. What do the words mean? They mean

that when we use a word without understanding clearly its full and proper sense, we deceive ourselves and actually destroy our own powers of thought.

Words must not be trifled with. Every word is sacred and lives to serve a purpose. He who corrupts them by using them without making clear to himself and others what he means by them is in danger of corrupting his own life and that of others under his influence.

A famous Arab scholar wrote: 'Every sentence is like a drop of gold.' 'Words stand rooted in the root of national life; they are nourished from a people's history'; and an American thinker writes: 'Words often make the thought, and the master of words will say things greater than are in him. Whoever makes a sentence of words utters in his own wisdom but the wisdom of the race whose life is in the words?'

If words, as I said before, stand for things actually existing and represent their nature, we can understand their proper meaning only by observing carefully their nature. We must, therefore, cultivate our power of observation—we must be what the poet Wordsworth calls 'all eye and all ear'. The difference between a man who thinks deeply and a man who thinks loosely lies in the use each has made of his mind by the use of his eyes and ears. A good example of this is given by Wordsworth in his lines on 'Peter Bell'. Peter Bell saw a flower—a primrose—by the river's brim. What did it mean to him? He saw it daily but never cared to know what idea the flower carried with it beyond what it looked to the bare eye—a yellow flower which people called a primrose. But its beauty, its purpose, its service to man and its place in the Universe he never thought of. He was of that class of men who see only

the outside of things and pass on, never troubling to enquire into their nature.

You can avoid loose thinking if you follow the following rules:—(1) Be careful and accurate in what you observe as facts. (2) Weigh those facts carefully to find out the conclusion to which, in your opinion, they lead. (3) Examine that conclusion by the light of those who have drawn opposite conclusions. Hear all sides, and test yours by them. (4) Through truthfulness and sincerity form your final conclusion which is called judgment. In short, be upright and you are sure to learn to be right even after repeated mistakes.

The object of thinking is to find out Truth and to distinguish between the true and the false. All of us pay respect to truth. A truthful man is trusted; a liar is condemned. Even a liar likes to pass off for a truthful man. The Hindu *Upanishads* sing that truth alone conquers. The Bible says the same. God is addressed as the Truth and begged to bless us with the light of His truth to stimulate all our faculties. That is to say, we pray for the power to seek truth and find it by our thoughts, speech, and conduct. To think rightly is, in fact, to discern the true. This faculty, which discerns the true, as distinguished from the false, is called judgment.

Judgment must naturally first proceed upon the evidence of our senses. We judge between the true and the false by what we have either seen or heard. The mind then decides what it thinks is true. But it often happens that, upon the same evidence of the senses, one man thinks that to be true which another man thinks to be false. Sir Walter Raleigh, when he was confined in a room in a prison, saw a large crowd of men gather

outside on the public road to witness a sight. What that sight was Sir Walter could not see from his cell in the prison. So he asked a number of people what they had met to see. Each gave an account which differed from the rest. Thereupon Sir Walter observed how difficult it was to find out truth, when men could not all agree even as to what they had all observed with their own eyes at the same time and in the same place. There is nothing surprising in this. At least one man in the crowd probably told Sir Walter Raleigh truly what had happened; but the rest in the crowd could not tell the truth because their observation was at fault. Had Sir Walter Raleigh questioned each man minutely, and exercised his own judgment, he would have probably found out whose version was true and whose false.

The fact is that, although Truth is the same in reality and in fact, it is man's way of finding it which distorts it and turns it into Falsehood. Falsehood is made to appear Truth because of men's prejudices and passions. If we get rid of prejudice we should be able to discern rightly between the true and the false. That is why Shakespeare advises every one to be true to himself. Truth is like light. We cannot see it when our mind's eye is blinded by passion or ignorance. In the *Bhâgavat Purana* there is a verse which names certain virtues in a regular order and defines them. The order in which the virtues are named and defined is as follows :—(1) Peace of mind, (2) self-restraint, (3) patience, (4) fortitude, (5) charity, (6) concentration, (7) courage, and (8) truth. Note the striking feature of the order in which these eight virtues are enumerated. The order begins with *peace of mind* and ends with *truth*. The reason is that he is able to discern truth who has composed his mind.

That is peace. Then he should fortify his mind, his thinking power, by the next six virtues. That enables him to find truth. Truth is not merely speaking truly but acting truly. And we act truly and become true only when we do unto others as we would be done by, that is to say, when we act towards others, whether friends or foes, fairly and honestly, and love all, even enemies, as we love ourselves.

Our duty is, therefore, to discern truth from falsehood by being faithful to the light of the intelligence God has given unto us. Because we cannot discern the whole of it, we should not give up the struggle which is our birthright. That is how the human race has advanced and ennobled itself. To the sincere and upright, the light of truth comes even in darkness.

CHAPTER XIII

POWER TO FEEL

MAN has not only a mind to think but he has also a heart to feel. Our feelings such as love, pity, mercy, hatred, anger, greed, and the like proceed from the heart and are divided into two classes, good and bad. We may know what is good. That is not enough. We must act according to it. Action requires the impulse or driving power of feeling. The heart supplies it. Knowledge obtained by the mind is like light; but of what use is light if we do not move by its aid? The heart moves us to live by the light. Hence it is compared to lightning which not only shines as light but moves the light.

The heart by its passions leads to action, and a man's actions make up his character of man. All great religions have held the heart to be the seat of God. The Hindu *Shastras* and saints speak of the heart as the temple of God. The Bible says the pure in heart see God. The heart is spoken of by the *Upanishads* as 'the cave of God'. Some Hindu saints speak of it as the cradle in which we lie as God's children and He rocks us. The Prophet of Islam declared that the heart of man is between two fingers of God. Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, said: 'He alone is a true Hindu whose heart is just and he alone a good Mahomedan whose life is pure.' Another hymn of Guru Nanak advises: 'Keep watch over thy heart; so shalt thou be really a learned man. Abandon evil designs, ease, evil speaking, mental anxiety, vexation.'

The Hindu saints liken the heart to the lotus flower and sing that Narayana (a name for God) is in the heart-lotus. Why is that? Because the lotus, although it grows in putrid water and mire, shines with stillness and looks up to the sky as if it opened its heart to God. It is, therefore, the emblem of a good man, who endures hardships and serves others in loving kindness. 'Abide pure amid the impurities of the world. As a lotus in the water remaineth dry, so by meditating on the Word and repeating God's name shalt thou be unaffected by the world', says Nanak.

We speak of a loving heart, not a loving mind. We merely respect a learned man, but we become attached to a man who feels for all, that is to say, who has a loving heart, and is full of mercy, forgiveness, and peace. God has so made man that feeling is born in him before knowing. Look at a baby just born. While it is a child it cries; it loves; it laughs—in short, it feels, though it is ignorant, having no knowledge. That shows that its heart is taught to love first and its mind to think and know afterwards.

We are told in the Bible that when God appeared in a vision to Solomon and asked him what boon he desired, Solomon prayed for a wise and understanding heart. Both thinking and feeling should go together. A man who merely thinks but does not feel is what the Saint Ramdas calls a learned fool—a cold and calculating man. Mere knowledge is useless unless it is allied to noble feeling leading to right action. Professor William James in his book on *Psychology* mentions a Russian lady who used to attend theatres and was fond of witnessing plays and performances there. Whenever she saw tragic scenes in a performance she used to shed tears and sob

at the sight of mock suffering on the stage. At the close of every performance in which some tragic scene was acted, she would come out of the theatre with tears still in her eyes and get into her carriage weeping. But while she felt and wept for those imagined sufferings witnessed on the stage, she was indifferent to her coachman who, while she was witnessing the play, was freezing to death while waiting outside to take her home in her carriage! The advice William James gives as a moral of this story is—never to suffer oneself to have an emotion or feeling of pity or kindness without expressing it in some active way, even if the expression be the least in the world, such as speaking kindly to others, giving up one's seat to others, and practising those kindly offices, opportunities for which occur to every one in the daily intercourse of life. Such unremembered acts of kindness and of love, though little, are like the seeds of corn, which seem small, but when sown in the soil, yield the harvest of plenty.

There is no man so bad that you cannot improve him by your goodness. A Hindustani proverb says, 'The whole world seems good, if you are good.' You cannot reform a bad man by merely arguing with him about virtue. For ten arguments you use in support of virtue, he may advance a hundred in defence of vice. Mere reasoning may make him obstinate. But by the force of your own example and helpful sympathy, you can quietly win him over to virtue more easily. A famous Irish priest once went to preach temperance to a drunkard. The drunkard, on seeing the priest approach, threatened to strike and poured abuses on him. The priest saw that it was useless to convert the drunkard by preaching. He therefore decided to return home; but,

before leaving, he took into his hands the drunkard's little child who was standing by, and kissed its cheeks. This love shown by the priest to his child at once melted the drunkard's heart, and he fell at the priest's feet and became a teetotaller.

This virtue of a feeling heart is thus explained by Saint Jnyaneshwara: 'That man is sound in his feelings who helps and lifts up others, who are either ignorant or diseased or sinful or exposed to contempt for other like weaknesses. By his personal aid, he makes them forget their defects. He sees them with his pure sight of sympathy, as a worshipper first decks the deity he worships with fine clothes and fragrant flowers and then looks at the deity with eyes of worship, or as a farmer, having sown good seed in his soil, eyes it with love when it ripens into corn, or as a host satisfies his guest by hospitality and then receives a blessing. Similarly, we must feel for others, who are helpless or poor or diseased, by the force of our own goodness. Do not wound others by exposing their secret faults. Do not tease them by speaking of their sins. Do not name to them their defects and say to them they are bad. Help them out of their bad condition by words and deeds of goodness. Shed about them the sweet fragrance of your own life of kind thought and loving action. Never wound and sting them by reminding them of their fallen condition but elevate them by the purity and greatness of your heart's affections. Raise them by your loving service, do not lower them by carping and ridicule.'

CHAPTER XIV

LOVE OF THE BEAUTIFUL

WHEN we see an object, we are apt to ask: 'Is it useful?' We do not care to enquire: Is it beautiful? The poet Keats sang in a line which has since become a proverb, that 'a thing of beauty is a joy forever'. Man is made by God not only to crave for the useful but also to love the beautiful. Man does not merely live for the pleasure of eating, drinking and sleeping, but also for the joy of beauty. The instinct of love of beauty even in its lowest form is divine, the highest part of man's nature.

What then is beauty? Men of all ages and countries have agreed upon the view that this world and all the objects in it are beautiful. This agreement shows that there is in this world and its objects a quality which is named beauty. It is true that the objects differ from one another in their appearance to man's eye. St. Paul in the Bible says: 'All flesh is not the same flesh; but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and glory of the moon; and another glory of the stars, for one star differeth from another in glory.' Beauty, therefore, is various, but its common quality is the glory of God, which presents itself to man as loveliness.

The world is beautiful and man is created that he may enjoy it and make himself beautiful too—beautiful in

body, mind, and spirit. There is nothing ugly in the world; it is our mind that makes things ugly. A Persian legend about Christ says that once, while travelling with his disciples, he came across the body of a dead dog lying on the road. As it stank, the disciples ran afar from it, saying that it looked horrid and gave a bad smell. Christ, however, went near the dead dog, and, calling his disciples, said: 'How beautiful are the teeth of this dead dog, white like pearls!' That is a lesson to show that even ugly things have their share of beauty, if only we would see.

See how in the *Vedas* the sun, the moon, the stars, the sky, birds, trees, rivers, flowers, in fact the whole creation filled our Aryan ancestors with admiration, hope, and love, and from it they learnt that there is a moral law governing the universe. Their presentation of the world's beauty is summed up by Guru Nanak in a hymn in these words: 'The Sun and Moon, O Lord, are Thy lamps; the firmament Thy salver; the orbs of the stars, the pearls encased in it. The perfume of the sandal is Thy incense; the wind is Thy fan; all the forests are Thy flames, O Lord of Light!'

Our Indian poets, Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti, paint the whole world as beauty. Sunrise is a symbol of birth; sunset with its gorgeous colours, of death leading to life again; the mid-day noon, of life's splendour; the night, of the joy of stillness; birds and their songs, of life and its music; flowers, of life's purity and fragrance; hills and mountains, of life's majesty; rivers, of life rising from the springs of God flowing and fertilizing fields to give food to man and joining the ocean; the sea, of the brotherhood of man and the waves of the sea, as they rise and fall are like a man kneeling and bending his head

in prayer—in short, they are what a Hindu would call *Namaskar*.

Say not, therefore, 'Love utility only.' Love beauty too. Useful things maintain life; beautiful things ennoble it. And all things are beautiful, if our minds are beautiful. Food, drink, dress and other things which are necessary to life are classed as useful things. But, as has been said, man lives not by bread alone. He lives for beauty too.

Emerson, a great American, once wrote: 'Have you found out that Nature is always talking to you, especially when you are alone, though she has not the gift of articulate speech?' By Nature, he meant the sun, the moon, the stars, the sky, the trees, the flowers and all the dumb creation that we see about us. They are not dumb, though they cannot speak like us. They all do speak to us, they all do teach us, if we but open our eyes and lend our ears to them. How do they speak? You ask.

I will tell you how, by means of a simple story, which may interest you. Once I happened to take a walk in a garden, which was full of roses. I saw there a young girl not more than fourteen years of age. When she came into the garden, her face showed signs of sadness. The roses caught her eyes. She stood motionless for a time, all the while intently looking at the roses. Gradually, her eyes became eager, her face began to brighten; it wore an expression of quiet joy on it; her sadness changed into sweetness. She seemed to fall as it were in love with the roses. Attracted by the sight, I went up to her and asked: 'What are you doing with these roses?' She replied: 'I am talking to the roses and they are talking to me.' 'Indeed',—I further asked her—'I can understand your talking to them; you can speak; but the

roses cannot. How then do you say they are talking to you?' 'Don't they?'—she sweetly said—'Just see. Their silence is more than my speech. How lovely they look! Their look is itself eloquence to me. How they bloom, shine, and spread in the midst of thorns and give me joy! How they send out their sweet scent all round! Is not that more than speech to me? Does not that teach me more than any lesson from books or teacher at school that we too should live the life of a rose?'

CHAPTER XV

POWER TO DECIDE AND ACT

THERE is a story told of a rich citizen of the United States of America, who, for long, was a member of its Senate. He was a good man, who wished to please every one and was averse to saying or doing anything for fear it might make people his enemies. Having completed the sixty-sixth year of his age, he celebrated the day by giving a banquet to his numerous friends. In replying to the toast of his health, he congratulated himself that though he had been long in public life, he had 'no sorrows, no anxieties, no unsatisfied ambitions, no jealousies, no disappointments with anybody', and he had not made a single enemy. A newspaper next morning concurred, but remarked that, while he had made friends of every one, he had achieved nothing worth mentioning and his public life was a blank; and it quoted the following lines :—

> He journeyed on. A course exact
> He marched with limitations small.
> He ne'er made enemies. In fact
> He ne'er did anything at all.

The meaning of these lines is that to get on in life by pleasing everybody requires no courage or other great quality; any man, however poor in character or mind, can attempt to do that and succeed too. If you wish to accomplish any good in this world, you must think carefully before taking a step, and, having decided calmly what that step shall be, go forward, and strive to achieve

your object. Such a one is deliberate and firm in his resolution, able to face opposition, endures calumny and is staunch in his faith and in honest action for his cause. The world seems to like those who conform to its ways and conventions. It pats them on the back, calls them its leaders, but it knows that they are good for nothing. In critical emergencies, when grave national issues are involved, it does not trust them. It does not place any responsibility upon them. While at first it hates and even persecutes those who differ from it because they wish to reform it, at last it learns to love and worship them, because it is such men who improve the world and influence it for good. They have been men with power to decide and act. Men with that power are the real wealth of their country and their race.

Men who have not that power are those who have either no convictions of their own, or who, if they have them, are not courageous enough to act up to them. They are afraid of displeasing others. They are led in the course of their lives by either favour or fear. They agree with every man they talk to. They say *Yes* to one and *No* to another, according as the one or the other says Yes or No.

Bunyan in his *Pilgrim's Progress* describes such men by a character named Facing-both-ways. St. John mentions a people called Laodiceans who, he says, were 'neither cold nor hot'. If a thing is neither hot nor cold, we say it is lukewarm, that is, indifferent. So the Laodiceans were a lukewarm people, with no zeal for or against anything. Therefore, says St. John, God cursed them in these words: 'Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.' Because the Laodiceans had no will to decide and act

but were indifferent how they thought and acted, God rejected them as a useless people. Dante, the Italian poet, in his work called the *Divine Comedy*, gives a visionary account of the people he saw in heaven and hell after death. He mentions certain people whom he met, neither in heaven nor hell, but confined in a separate and most dreary place, because, while on earth, their lives had been passed in trying to agree with and please everybody. They had lived for their own selfish purposes 'without blame or without praise'. Dante, when he saw them, recognized in them 'the crew of caitiffs, hateful to God and to God's enemies.'

Lukewarm people are the greatest enemies of their country. Even those who strongly oppose a good cause attract attention to it by their opposition. But indifference is its worst enemy, for the cause has then no chance of getting a hearing.

Power to decide and to act is, therefore, a virtue of great value. When you have found a course of conduct to be true and right, it means a call to you to act by its light. If we have not the courage to act, we begin to offer all sorts of excuses, give plausible explanations and we become cowards or hypocrites. That is one of the great lessons of the *Bhagavad Gita*. There Arjuna, led by Sri Krishna, appears on the battlefield against his enemies. The moment, however, Arjuna sees the enemy, consisting of his own kith and kin, he faints in his resolution to fight, and refuses to make war till Sri Krishna tells him to regain his power to decide and act. Recovering that power Arjuna fights and wins.

In ordinary life how often we fail in that power! We wish to be regular and punctual in our daily life; we resolve to do a task at a particular hour; but the

appointed time comes, our decision fails, and we become irregular and indolent. Take another instance. Some one asks us to do something which we think either bad, or, if it is good, it is not in our power to do it. We do not like to displease him. So, not having the decision of character to say 'No' we say 'Yes'; and we make cowards of ourselves.

Men who have not the power to decide and act for themselves lean on other people for their thoughts and actions; they have no bottom of their own. On the other hand men who think for themselves calmly, and then act according to the light they have found by their own thought, elevate mankind because, by their manliness of thought and action, they lift the world from sloth, ignorance, sin, and slavery. The world wants men sound in thought, deliberate in choice, and decisive in righteous action.

CHAPTER XVI

CONTROL OF DESIRES

THE story is told in one of the *Puranas* that once upon a time Indra, having committed the sin of murder, there was great indignation among the *Rishis*. They were thinking of deposing him; but in the meantime Indra disappeared and remained in hiding. The throne having become vacant, the *Rishis* elected one Nahusha to it, because he had deserved it by a life of great austerity. But unfortunately for Nahusha, from the moment he ascended the throne and became king, he desired to use his power for his own sensual pleasures. He cast his eyes on Indra's wife, whose beauty had bewitched him. He tried to win her; but as she was chaste and faithful to her husband Indra, she repelled King Nahusha's attempts to seduce her. Nahusha, however, was so blinded by his passions that nothing could correct him. To foil him, Indra's wife hit upon an ingenious device. She sent word to him that she would accept him only if he would come over to her by a mode of conveyance which none had till then adopted. Nahusha could find no such form of carriage; but it struck him that the way to meet the unusual condition prescribed by Indra's wife was to go to her in a palanquin carried by *Rishis* employed as bearers, because, although palanquins had till then been used as conveyances, *Rishis* had never been employed as bearers. The *Rishis* naturally felt incensed at this insult. But what could they

do? Nahusha was king and threatened dire punishment if his orders were not obeyed. Hence they reluctantly bore the palanquin with the king seated in it. When they started, Nahusha, in the blindness of his passion and his impatience to get to Indra's wife, kept on saying to the *Rishi* bearers: 'Run swift like serpents; like serpents be quick!' So excited he became that he lost all control over himself. 'Be serpents, serpents!' he repeated to the *Rishis* and kicked one of them to make them run faster than they did. That incensed them all the more. They threw down the palanquin with its royal occupant on the road and pronounced a curse upon King Nahusha in these words: 'Mad king, victim of your passion! Become a serpent yourself.' Nahusha as a result of the curse at once changed into a serpent and was hurled down from heaven. His desire for pleasure and for enjoyment had turned his head. Therefore, he lost his kingdom and his life.

This story is intended to teach the lesson that 'masterly self-command is the key to all character.' He who has not learnt to control his desires is in danger of making a wreck of his life. The instinct of desire is given to him for proper use and not abuse.

Man has a dual nature. Like the lower animals he has the brute in him, ignorant, coarse, selfish and sensual; but he has also the capacity to tame the brute and rise to the dignity of an angel, if he will. While like the lower animals, he is a creature of desires, which instinctively seek the gratification of the senses, man has what the lower animals have not—the power to judge what is good and what is evil and prefer the good by deliberate choice, instead of being blindly led by his desires. Of this higher

nature of man, the poet Matthew Arnold has sung in these lines :—

> The will is free;
> Strong is the Soul, and wise, and beautiful.
> The seeds of God-like power are in us still,
> Gods are we, Bards, Saints, Heroes, if we will.

That is to say, the instinct of desire is given to man that he may, by the power of his will, which is free, tame the brute in him and become a god or an angel. If we merely consult our desires, we are often deceived. We must control them by another faculty or power which we have. This is called the power of discrimination, and by it we distinguish between good and evil and direct the satisfaction of our desires accordingly. The proper direction of the desires is called self-command, self-control or self-mastery. Master yourself by mastering your desires. Leave desires to master you and you become a slave, the sport of passion, a victim of your animal nature.

For instance, the desire for food is a natural one. Unless we eat we cannot live; Nature has endowed us with a craving for food when we feel hungry. When we partake of it, we enjoy it. The food we eat tastes sweet or pleasant to the tongue, but if we take more of it than is good for our digestion and health, the food meant for health becomes a poison, breeds disease and shortens life. Therefore the desire for food must be controlled by moderation. Hence the advice: *Eat to live, do not live to eat.*

Again, the desire for strength of body and health is secured by gymnastic exercises, games, and sports. These make a man hardy and brave. But if, because a man has satisfied that desire and become strong of

physique, he uses his strength without proper restraint, his strength will tempt him to ill-treat others, especially those who are weaker than himself. As Shakespeare says: 'It is excellent to have a giant's strength; but it is tyrannous to use it like a giant.' It must be used to defend the weak and help the needy.

Then there is the desire for the pleasures of life. There are men who think that life is all a holiday—for mirth, enjoyment and amusement. They waste their time in frivolous pursuits or carnal pleasures. But make pleasure your aim in life and it soon turns you into its slave. You become incapable of all good and serious work. In the words of Professor Seeley, 'by making pleasure the chief aim, it frustrates its own object.' Therefore, the best way to get pleasure out of life is to adopt a mode of living which will give pleasure without your thinking of it.

So also about the desire for wealth. If a man makes greed for riches his end in life, money becomes his god and he turns into a miser. The more wealth he amasses the more greedy he becomes. Therefore, advises the saintly George Herbert:

Get to live;
Then live and use it; else it is not true
That thou hast gotten.

The instinct of desire is given to man to make him happy. But for his desire for health, knowledge, wealth, reputation and the like, man would find life a misery. You must live for a purpose or else life becomes a waste. And the great purpose of life is happiness. Man wants health, learning, money and fame to make him happy. They are not ends but means to an end. What is happiness? We often see men who are blessed with

sound constitutions and with riches and reputation and scholarship and yet they are not happy. Why is that? The reason is that while these are mere means to an end, and the end is happiness, happiness is a state of the mind. As the Hindu sage Manu puts it, 'When we are dependent on anything external, it becomes a cause of unhappiness. When we are masters of our own selves, and not the slaves of outside things, we have the means of happiness at our feet.'

It is said of Michael Angelo, the famous Italian painter and sculptor who lived between 1475 and 1564, that he was one day hewing away at a block of marble to turn it into a statue of an angel. A spectator, not knowing what the artist was trying to make of the marble, asked him why he was taking great pains over it. Michael Angelo replied: 'I am trying to set free the angel in this marble.' If a man can turn a lifeless thing like marble into a lifelike figure of an angel by taking pains over it and bringing the marble under the control of his mind, how much more should he be able to make an angel of his own self by means of that very control—an angel living the life of goodness, beauty, and truth!

CHAPTER XVII

THOUGHT ENDING IN ACT

OF what value, then, is the Power of Thought? of what value is thought if it does not result in action. A man who merely thinks and preaches virtue and goodness, but does not act it in his life, is regarded as either a dreamer or a hypocrite. It is easy to talk of being true, and kind: but truth and kindness and all the qualities which adorn man and make life valuable are intended for practice, not mere precept. Of what use is it to know and think that I should be honest, industrious, regular, healthy and so forth, if I do not act accordingly? Knowledge is like light. If a man sees light and does not live by it, he is worse than a blind man. So it is with us if we merely think but do not act.

The whole gist of the *Bhagavad Gita* lies in its teaching that action must follow thought or our life is wasted. Sri Krishna tells Arjuna that the whole world is bound by action. It is a law of necessity, whether we will or no, that we must act. If we do not eat when we are hungry or drink when we feel thirsty, we become sick and die. The discoveries of science, the teachings of religion and philosophy—all that man has found by his best thoughts—have proved useful because they are meant for his use and action, they have been carried out in practice. The Vedas, the Gita, the Bible, the Koran were all written for man's action, not mere reading and thinking.

Want of decision means a life of doubt. The man who lives in doubt can never be happy. Very often we have to decide questions, one way or the other; we are called upon to follow one of several courses of conduct. Life is a choice of thoughts and actions; we have to choose between them. Life is short and admits of no delays. Life is also full of risks and we have to take risks and decide amidst doubts and difficulties. The fear of mistakes makes us indecisive; so does indolence or the fear of displeasing others.

There is the example of Lord Acton. He was a most learned man; his knowledge of history was marvellous. But he was afraid of writing any great work on history for fear of failure. He would write mere essays and pamphlets; he feared to undertake any higher work. Cardinal Newman wrote to him: 'If you are desperately afraid of making a mistake, you will never make anything. Take your risks. Publish something. If you don't, when you come to die, you will have accomplished nothing.' The true and useful man is he who is sincere, who dares do what he thinks right and is not afraid that people may think him wrong. It is not given to all of us to be right always but it is given to all of us to be upright. And the first way to cultivate decision is to be upright.

Having done that, and learnt to be fearless, follow the following rule given by Socrates for acquiring the habit of decision:—'Hear others courteously; answer them wisely; consider soberly—then decide impartially.' It does not matter if, after you have done this, people say that you are wrong. But you cannot be far wrong; even if you are, your decisiveness is of itself a most valuable asset. It gives you influence with people; you

become a power for good because you do not shirk responsibility, and do not waver in your decisions. You are trusted because, even if you are wrong, you are sincere and leave others in no doubt as to what you say and do.

Care should be taken at the same time that the habit of decision does not pass into stubbornness. A man of decision acts on some principle which is good. He comes to a conclusion on any question he has considered after careful thought and after hearing patiently all points of view; and to that conclusion he adheres until he is clearly satisfied he is wrong. But the decision of a stubborn man proceeds from no principle except that of his own conceit and selfishness. A man of decision is firm in his conclusions, but at the same time humble. While adhering to his own opinion, he respects opinions to the contrary and changes his own when they are proved to his mind to be erroneous. A stubborn man, on the other hand, adheres to his own view simply because it is *his* view; he makes action and association with him difficult and disagreeable. A man of decision, adhering to his own view, chooses what he knows to be right and hopes to persuade others that it is right.

He who writes a great poem must live a great poem, says Milton. It follows that, when by thought we have discerned the good, we must live it or else we sink in life. Hence the poet Tennyson has said: 'We needs must love the highest when we see it,' meaning that a good thought is a good ought; it is our duty to live in action by it.

The word *Virtue* comes from the Latin word *vir*, which means *man*; so virtue means *manliness* or *manhood*, the quality of a man who has been *manly* in life by his acts,

and not by mere thoughts. 'No man', writes the saintly Martineau, 'can have a true idea of right until he does it; any genuine reverence for it till he has done it often and with cost; any peace ineffable till he does it always and with alacrity.'

We must, therefore, act according to the best thoughts we have. When we read or hear a good precept or lesson, it is a call to us to go and do likewise. In following the thought by action, however, we may fail. But if every time we fail and fall, we rise and persevere we are sure to win in the end. The falls we have experienced try us, test us, harden us, and finally lead to success because, in spite of failure, we have been steady in pursuing a good action prompted by good thoughts. If we are faithful to our resolution to act in obedience to good thoughts, that which looks like failure will end in success.

CHAPTER XVIII

STRENGTH OF WILL

THE will is the driving power of the mind. If it is strong, I am strong; if it is weak, I am weak. A strong will is a merit; a weak will is a defect, as is shown by such sayings as these: 'The world belongs to Will more than to Wisdom.' 'Will power is the Omnipotence of God in Man.' The *Bible* advises: 'Quit ye like men, be strong.' To be strong is to possess what the Hindu Shastras call *Satva*, which means the strength of virtue. Says the *Bhagavad Gita*: 'That man who has *Satva* is strong, who is free from attachment, i.e., anxiety as to whether he will obtain or not what he desires, who does not glory and talk of himself and his doings, who is endowed with courage and zeal, and who does his duty without care for success or failure, the applause or censure of people.' From the *Upanishads* we learn that in ancient times a teacher opened his class of pupils with a prayer in which God was implored as follows: 'Help us to be virile,' i.e. strong (*Saha viryam karava mahai*).

There are some who think that we are not free to control our wills, and make them strong, because we are bound by fate or luck. There is a wide notion that Indians are fatalists and that our *Shastras* do not believe in a free will. That is not so. Some of the *Shastras* no doubt do preach luck and fate and deny freedom to the Will of Man. But the best of the *Shastras* do not. For instance, our Rishi Vasishta, who was the teacher of Sri Ramchandra, the hero of the *Ramayana*, taught his

royal pupil not to believe in luck or fate but to cultivate his power to will the good and do it.

Vasishta's advice in the *Ramayana* is: 'He who is averse to diligence and relies on his fortune is an enemy to his own soul and sacrifices all his virtues, riches, and hopes, to his idleness. It is the exercise of our senses, and of our will that leads to success. Whenever we do anything it is due to our exertions, not to fate. It was by their own exertions of will that Brahaspati became the Lord of gods and Shukra became the teacher of demons. Many weak, poor, miserable men have become equal to Indra himself by means of their exertions. This is the long and short of all the *Shastras*, that diligence preserves our minds from all evils by employing them to whatever is good and right. To apply with diligence to whatever is excellent, not low or mean and not liable to loss or decay, is the precept of parents and preceptors. I obtain the fruit of my labour in proportion to my exertion. Hence I say, I enjoy the fruit of my labour, and not of fortune. Men of little understanding rely only on fortune in their miserable state. Wise men escape from difficulties by means of their exertions; but not so the mistaken fatalist by his fruitless inertness. Think upon this, O Rama, and *do as you will.*'

'Do as you will.' That is to say, do as your will, made strong wisely, exerts itself.

John Stuart Mill rightly defined character as fashioned Will, i.e. a strong will so fashioned or made as to be directed to good thoughts and deeds and to hate falsehood and hypocrisy, which weaken the will.

How can you obtain strength of will? Begin first with the little acts of your daily life. At a fixed hour you wish to rise from sleep, to take a walk, to study, to take

your meals—and so on. Accustom yourself to do all this at the hour which you have willed, come what may. Do not be tempted away from that practice by indolence but master it by your better self. Do not allow the will to depart from your fixed course by any kind of excuse which indolence so easily finds. In addition, try to find some duty every day which is irksome and do it. This daily practice of little duties will harden your will in a short period and is sure to give you the power to prompt performance of great duties and deeds.

It is by being good and faithful in a few things and in those which are least that we get the power to become faithful over many things and those which are greatest. Begin by exercising your will power in the small things of your daily life and intercourse and you are sure to grow into a man of strong will, able to hold your own in small things and great.

CHAPTER XIX

PURPOSE IN LIFE

In all his conscious actions, man acts with a purpose. If he wishes to pick up a stone lying in the road, he puts forth his hand with the purpose of picking up the stone. This we can see clearly in the small matters of every-day life. But if we were to ask a man 'what is your chief purpose in life? Why do you wish to live, instead of dying and ceasing to exist?' what would he say? Many men would say that they wished to earn food or comfort, or happiness. Then we should ask 'What is happiness? If this is your purpose in life, what is it?'

The truest and best answer would probably be 'Freedom'; and a wise man would answer 'Freedom to do, not what I choose, but what I ought to choose.' In fact, his purpose in life would be not freedom to do as he liked, but freedom to do the good and avoid the bad.

That is to do the will of God. It is in that sense liberty is precious both as the means to and the end of a life worthily lived. The word *liberty* is often loosely used as if it meant license for each man to say and do whatever he pleases, good or bad. But liberty in its true sense carries the idea of moral restraint. Who is free? ask the Hindu *Shastras* or the Christian religion or the religion of Islam. All agree that only he is free who has conquered his own petty self, his passions and evil nature. Man, to be free, must first extinguish the brute in him. If he had liberty without that restraint and used it as his purpose in life, the world would be a

hell—men would in that case rob, murder, deceive one another. True liberty is, in the words of the poet Tennyson, 'Self-reverence, self-knowledge, and self-control.'

Mark the word *self* in all these words—self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control. Self-reverence means self-respect—faith in yourself. You can never do anything efficiently unless you think you are worth something, that you have capacity and that if you exert yourself, you can achieve what you desire or aspire to. But such confidence in your own self may prove your curse unless you know that the *self* in you is that which you must reverence. There are two selves in each of us—the good and the bad, the virtuous and the vicious, the unselfish and the selfish. Which of these two qualities should you reverence? You would certainly answer: 'The qualities of goodness, virtue and unselfishness.' But before you can reverence them, you have to know their real value in life. Reverence for a person or thing implies love for the person or thing; and, love is not a thing apart from knowledge. For instance, why does a man love his mother? Because he knows her as his mother. So it leads to reverence. That is self-knowledge—knowledge of your higher self, knowledge that you are not a mere animal made to live the life of cattle, and waste yourself in mere pleasure and pastime. But the mere *knowledge* of self cannot give you strength to govern your life unless the knowledge is translated into *action*. For this self-control is necessary. Self-control is the conquest of your lower self by the higher self.

Such liberty is our purpose in life—the liberty of what the Hindus call *shânti* (peace); *kshamâ* (forgiveness), and *daya* (mercy or kindness): and what Christ calls the

liberty of the man made free by truth. That purpose attained, all other purposes in life coming under its sway become our salvation. This is the liberty that we should seek and it is in that sense that the great historian Lord Acton wrote that 'liberty is the end, i.e., the purpose of individuals and of nations in life.' That is the teaching of the Bible, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Koran*.

CHAPTER XX

THE CONSCIENCE

CONSCIENCE is the knowledge which a man, or indeed any animal, possesses without being taught by any one else: it is very nearly the same as Faith, which, according to Tennyson, 'believes where it cannot prove.' When an animal has been well fed, it knows, without being taught, that no more food is necessary, and that more food would do it harm. It cannot prove that more food would hurt it, but it possesses this knowledge, which is given by God to all animals.

It is made clear by our every-day experience that man has conscience to judge between right and wrong. Observe children. They are not educated, they have no knowledge; but still they are aware when they do an act which is bad; something inside them pricks them; they hide themselves or are afraid. It is the same with uncivilized people with no knowledge of arts and science, and no religion except the fear of ghosts. For instance, when certain savages were brought to England, the great scientist Darwin wrote, after seeing them and conversing with them, that he was struck with the capacity for moral and mental development which they showed. From that it is clear that man, whatever and wherever he is, is 'a God in the germ'—he has the voice of God in him capable of growth by education.

Are there not moments in your own daily life, when something in you whispers how you have wasted time, spoken a harsh word, done injury to some one, or proved

false to your sense of duty? This thought is well brought out by the poet Browning in the following lines:—

O, we're sunk enough here, God knows!
But not quite so sunk that moments,
Sure though seldom, are denied us,
When the spirit's true endowments
Stand out plainly from the false ones,
And apprise it if pursuing
Or the right way or the wrong way
To its triumph or undoing.

We in this world seem mere mortals degraded by sin. Nevertheless there are moments even in the life of the worst sinner when something in him tells him whether he has acted in the right way or the wrong way, and whether he has triumphed by obeying the call of his Conscience, or whether, by disobeying it, he has undone his higher nature. This something in man, which enables him to discern between right and wrong, is his *Conscience.* It warns us, and makes us repent and feel ashamed when we do wrong.

Conscience must, like the body and the mind, be exercised to be active and healthy. Being the light of God in man, it must be kept burning in us always, just as a wick must be fed with oil, if it is to give light, otherwise it fades, and the light within us becomes darkness. How, then, is it to be exercised and kept active?

Conscience has been likened to a King, who issues orders for the government of his kingdom. The King does not carry out those orders himself but appoints a minister for that purpose. Conscience has also been compared to a Judge, who decides between the true and the false. His decisions are called judgments or decrees. He does not give effect to those decisions. They are

carried out by other officers. Similarly Conscience tells us what is good and what is bad. But it is left to our Will to act or not according to the voice of our Conscience. The Will of man is, therefore, the Minister of Conscience and prepares the way for the dictates of Conscience to govern our actions and our lives.

Conscience must be exercised by our will. The will must be strong and obedient to the voice of Conscience. Hence the need of strength of Will with which I have dealt in a previous chapter.

Education is one of the ways to train the Will. The object of education is not mere knowledge but knowledge forming character; and, as I have said before, Character is fashioned Will. Therefore, there must be knowledge of good and evil, right and wrong, to enable us to be good-willed and right-willed. Conscience no doubt tells us what is good and what is right, but its voice is at first so small, and, besides, our evil passions such as idleness, anger, and selfishness are so powerful that we have to learn from the thoughts, experiences and examples of wise men.

This instruction best comes from religion. The great religions teach us that God resides in each of us, that His voice as Conscience is always whispering to us, and that it is our duty to listen to that Voice and make it the light of our lives.

Why do all these religions insist upon prayer and meditation? Constant and steady prayer and meditation practised daily train us to retire into our own inner selves, seek the company of Conscience, which is God's Voice, and strengthen our Will. Our Will, which alone has the power to carry out what our Conscience orders, must go constantly to it, commune with it, and receive

its orders, understand them before it can execute them, like the Minister of a King who must be in regular attendance upon the King to receive his orders before executing them.

CHAPTER XXI

THE GROWTH OF CONSCIENCE AS HELPED BY EDUCATION, SOCIETY AND RELIGION

EVERY man has a Conscience and his duty is to develop it and obey its Voice. But for what purpose is man to develop his Conscience individually, alone and by himself in meditation and prayer? Conduct means behaviour towards other persons. No man, says St. Paul, in the Bible, liveth to himself. Our individual or personal Conscience is social also. It tells us to associate with others, to love them and do good to them. Of what use is my goodness, if I live by myself in the desert? It must be practised in my intercourse with others. Conscience grows by action, and action is the conduct of men towards and in relation to one another.

It is by practising truth, honesty, love, kindness and justice in our dealings with others that we become truthful, honest, loving, and kind and just. When men live and deal with one another, when each acts and moves with the rest, according to the dictates of his Conscience, he exercises it and it grows stronger day by day. That is how Society helps the growth of our Conscience. Society gives us opportunity every second of our lives to exercise our Conscience and bring it into play.

That is why in the *Bhagavad Gita* Sri Krishna says to Arjuna: 'Consider what people will think of you if you shrink from your duty. They will say that you are a coward. You will lose your own reputation and the

reputation of your family. The fear of the loss of your fame among the people, if nothing else, ought to shame you into the performance of your duty.'

All that is hallowed and holy in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita, the Puranas, the Bible, the Koran, and the Zendavesta—what is it but the Voice of God speaking through the Voice of Man—his Conscience, personal and social, revealed to men of succeeding generations to assist the growth of their Conscience?

CHAPTER XXII

ON LIFE IN GENERAL

WE sometimes read and hear it said that this life of ours is a mere delusion. The book called the *Ecclesiastes* in the Bible begins with a description of life as vanity, '*vanity of vanities*'. That writer viewed life as an unreality. Those who share that opinion about life paint it in dark colours as one scene of sorrows and suffering, relieved no doubt by pleasures, which, however, are themselves as fleeting as shadows and only serve to add to man's disappointment or distress. In some of the religious books of India you find life portrayed as *mâyâ*, mere dream or delusion.

It is a false view of life to look upon it as a dream or unreality. Life is real, it has meaning. Think you that this world, God's creation, with all its mysteries, its history of man's hopes, thoughts, aspirations, conflicts, which have found expression in art, poetry, science, religion, music, and government, have no meaning, serve no purpose, and make of life a mere bubble? No, my young friends! You, who are young, full of the buoyancy of youth, cannot think so, should not think so. 'An age touched by the spirit of hope inevitably turns to the young; for with the young lies fulfilment.' So wrote Lord Morley in one of his earlier works. Another writer—Benjamin Kidd—said: 'Give us the young and we will create a new earth'—an utterance, which, on account of its appealing eloquence, has been adopted for its motto by the London League of Youth, of which Mr. Lloyd George, the present English Prime Minister, is the

President. With the young rests the future of their country and their race. Therefore, their outlook on life should be one of *faith* and of *hope*. That outlook requires that a youth should learn to regard his life as a trust, a duty.

Why should it be so? Why is it so? you ask.

Have you come across the saying: 'Our young men see visions; our old men dream dreams'? The meaning of that is this. A vision is what one imagines will happen in the future. It is the sight of a bright prospect of what is to be, thought by the mind in its hopeful mood. Young men, having no experience of the past, not knowing the struggles of life as older men do, see only the future before them—how they will study, pass examinations, settle in life, marry, earn money, secure reputation, and serve their country and make it great. On the other hand, older men, who have tasted both the sweets and sorrows of life, see no visions of the future but dream of the past—of what they have seen, enjoyed, suffered, and either achieved or failed to achieve. So while youth sees the future as bright, old age turns to the past, and looks upon life by the light of it. Life needs light for guidance and that light comes both from the experience of the past and the hopes of the future. If we do not hope, we cannot live. Hope, says the poet, lies eternal in the human breast. But our hopes of the future must be regulated by our knowledge of the past—the experience, the knowledge, which the human race has gained during all the centuries and which are recorded in history, literature, science, and the thoughts and lives of individuals and nations.

When you look upon life by the light of the past and the prospect of the future, how does life present itself to

you? When the poet Wordsworth was a young student at college, surrounded by books, teachers and fellow-students, what was *his* experience? I give it in his own words:—

> Such is the strength and glory of our youth!
> The human nature to which I felt
> That I belonged, and reverenced with love,
> Was not a punctual presence but a spirit
> Diffused through time and space.

That is to say, Wordsworth, the youthful student, felt that he was not merely one young man cut off from the rest—a being breathing, moaning, thinking, by himself in the midst of many in his class or school in whose 'punctual presence', i.e., regular daily companionship, he lived, but that he was part, and that a necessary part, of human society with the spirit of the past from ancient times behind it, lighting up its future. He said to himself, 'I am not merely the boy called William Wordsworth. No. I am an Englishman, a native of my country, which has a glorious past, and which therefore has also a duty for the future. It is that past to which I owe my birth, my life and my all; and I must value life as given to me to adorn the pages of that history in the history of the human race and nature to which I belong.' Likewise should every young student in India think of life and his place in it.

What are you, my young Indian? A child of India, the land of the Himalayas and the Ganges, of the Vedas, the *Upanishads* the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, of heroes like Asoka, the first of Emperors in the history of the world, as the historian Lord Acton has said, to establish religious toleration as the mother of civil liberty and the first also to establish hospitals for not only men

but also for animals. You are of the land of Akbar, of Shivaji, of Kalidas! What a glory for you to think and be proud of! Look not low upon life, then. Say, Life is Duty, Life is Beauty. Fill yourself with a glorious vision of both. Young men see and ought to see visions. A nation with no visions of a life of noble thoughts and great deeds must necessarily perish.

CHAPTER XXIII

DUTY OF MAKING THE BEST OF LIFE

It is said that the view which a person takes of life depends upon his natural temperament and disposition. Some men are born with the gift of a cheerful frame of mind, which carries them through life with joy, because whatever happens, they are never depressed or distressed. Others born without that gift always fear danger, misery, failure, and misfortune, even in the midst of good and happiness.

Though our temperament and disposition are made by nature, yet by practice we can acquire the hopeful habit of mind necessary to the best of life.

Self-control can conquer any natural temperament. A self-controlled man becomes a self-made man. Heroism is defined in the *Bhâgavat Purâna* as conquest over one's own nature or disposition. 'Effort', says William James in his *Psychology*, 'is the substantive thing which we are: our strength, our intelligence, our wealth, and even our good luck are mere externals which we carry. Deeper than all such things and able to suffice unto itself without them is the sense of the amount of effort which we can put forth.' Man is what the *Upanishads* call a creature of faith; and science and experience teach us that if we act up to what we wish to believe, we shall attain belief. If we live in the belief that life is good, sacred, and worth living, faith in life soon grows into conviction.

Faith in life comes of looking at it as a whole, not partially. When you read a book or see a picture, what

do you do in forming a sound judgment about it? You do not judge the merits of the book by a word here, a sentence there, or an isolated passage or passages from it, and decide whether the book is worth study. Rather, you take all the words, sentences, passages, in fact the whole book with all its substance, into account and then assess its worth. Similarly, a picture is no picture without its shades as well as its lights.

Life is a mixture of good and evil, happiness and sorrow, comfort and suffering, wealth and poverty. Evil is there to be turned by our efforts into good, sorrow to strengthen our power of endurance, suffering to perfect us, poverty to remind us that a life of luxury derived from wealth weakens man. Who are the men who have improved the world? Have they not borne sorrow, suffered hardships, endured poverty, even given their lives for their cause, their country, their religion—for the good of humanity? Injustice, cruelty, wickedness, never soured their temper or abated their ardour. On the other hand, the evils of the world served but to spur them on to greater exertion.

An English proverb says *there are no gains without pains*. It is the same as the Indian proverb which runs: '*No Ishta* (*profit*) *without Kashta* (*labour*)'. That is the moral of both the Indian epics, the *Ramayana* and the the *Mahabharata*. Shri Ramchandra, the hero of the former, went with his wife, Sita, into exile gladly, endured privations, lived on wild fruits of the forest, fought Ravana, and saved his people. He never complained, but took his life of suffering with calmness as an incentive to a faithful performance of his duty to his people. The Pandava brothers of the *Mahabharata*, defeated by their enemies in a game of dice and deprived

of their kingdom, are another example. As the sage Sri Jnyaneshwara says of them, it is because the Pandavas endured misery, ignominy, and all the tortures, cruelties, injustice, of life with fortitude, and adhered to the end to the cause of truth and righteousness that God has immortalized them in the pages of the *Mahabharata*, while no one remembers even the names of their contemporaries, who prospered and enjoyed all the good things of the world, but had no moral backbone. What does the life of the boy Prahlada mean to us but another instance of a life lived so as to yield good out of its very evils? Christ died on the Cross, says the Bible, to save humanity. What does that signify? It signifies that life is full of crosses, and the conquest of life is for him who meets the crosses, takes them readily and by suffering perfects himself.

Our Hindu thinkers compare a good life to the sandalwood tree and to the sugarcane. Both are emblems of life worth living. They show that our life is given to us for the service of the world. None of us, great or small, is too little for that service. A sweeper who cleans the roads and does menial service is as important in God's eye as the statesman, if both do their work for the work's sake, and take a pride in doing it.

It is not the greatness or smallness of the work we do in life, but the spirit we put into it, that makes the work valuable.

He only lives well who carries a great soul and highness of purpose, who does not whine at life, but takes it as a great opportunity for faithful and loving service. In short, goodness consists not in high rank but in right living, that is to say, in deeds of love and service to others, in whatever station we are placed.

CHAPTER XXIV

IMPORTANCE OF TEMPERAMENT AND DISPOSITION *OR* POWER OF CHEERFULNESS

A FEW years ago a certain man was employed in the municipal service of the sacred city of Benares. His duty was to light up every evening all the lamps of the Municipality on the roads and in the streets. He did his duty most carefully. When he came up to each lamp-post, he would take into his hand the glass chimney and clean it with scrupulous care until not a single dark spot was left on it. While so cleaning, he would keep on uttering to himself the couplet in Hindustani :—

Jânaki Jeewana Râma,
Karongi tumâri Kâm,

i.e., 'O Rama, the life of Janaki' (husband of Sita) 'I am doing thy work'. The man was a worshipper of Rama, the hero divine of the *Ramayana*. So he prayed while doing his work as a menial servant of the Municipality and did it not for the wages he was paid, not so much for the bread he earned by it for himself and his family as for his duty to God. It was, he thought, his deity Rama's work which fell to his share and so he did it with joy. In other words, to him his duty, trivial and menial though it was, was all the same divine. Because he thought so, he did it cheerfully. Because he did it cheerfully, he put his whole mind, heart and soul into it. He therefore did it thoroughly. Every one saw that the lamps he lighted gave perfect light at

night. Was he not a faithful follower of the *Bhagavad Gita* which teaches: 'Do your duty in life, whatever it is, for God, without attachment to reward or care for result, and you adorn life by your service'?

The example of this municipal servant shows that a man's place or station in society gives his life the highest value when he knows that his work, however humble, is part of the larger work of this world, and that he does it with all his mind, heart, and soul. 'Mind your own business' is a maxim of importance, because your own business, being the business of the world, serves the world and forms your character. It is our daily *Yajna* or sacrifice. But to make it a real sacrifice you must do it cheerfully—with love for the work. The municipal servant mentioned above was an efficient worker, because he was a cheerful worker. He was a cheerful man because he made the best of his life.

To make yourself worthy of life you must have a high ideal of your duty. A low standard of duty means a low aim. He who aims low is sure to miss the mark. It is rightly said that if you wish to shoot with success anything that is on a high tree, you must have for your mark a star in the sky. 'Hitch your wagon to a star,' advised Emerson. That means, fix your ambition worthily high. Ambition is good, provided it is pursued with a due sense of duty. It is good to be proud of yourself, provided it is proper pride. Proper pride is humility or meekness. Moses was meek, says the Bible, meaning not that he was weak, yielding, with no convictions, but he was a man of strength who kept his power under strict control; he knew his own mind; he was not restless and impulsive. He mastered his passions and so mastered his people. His ideal was high—he

lived with God as his ideal in life and therefore he was ever cheerful and never depressed. See the sundial how it marks time by recording none but hours of sunshine. See how :—

> With Joy the stars perform their shining,
> The sea its long moon-silvered roll!
> For alone they live, nor pine with noting
> All the fever of some differing soul.

We must cultivate the habit of cheerfulness like them :—

> Look up and smile ;
> Enjoy your work ;
> And do not shirk ;
> Life's worth the while.

This habit of cheerfulness is sure to guard us against the failures and disappointments, of which life is full. The best way to meet them and be not dispirited is to be self-denying. Self-denial means readiness to be calm, happy and contented, when you do not get what you desire or have worked for. It is disinterested performance of duty. To be anxious about the rewards of life means worry, and worry is waste of life. The poet Browning says that 'man is nearer to God than brutes, because he, like God, can give rather than receive'. This is unselfishness. He can, if he wills it, deny to himself the good things of this world and feel happy in the happiness of others. Therefore it is said that 'it is more blessed to give than to receive'—that is to say, a man is ennobled not by what he *receives* from others in the shape of knowledge, riches, charity, kindness, honour or happiness but by what he *gives* from his own to others. In the *Upanishads* the teacher advises his pupils as follows :— 'Speak the truth; act the truth; give and give with

shraddha, i.e. faith.' And the *Bhagavad Gita* puts all that in a nutshell when it says 'no wealth is higher than the wealth of a man with a contented and cheerful mind, who does his duty disinterestedly and finds his happiness in the happiness of others'. Such wealth is his, who practises the doing unto others of what he would wish done unto himself.

CHAPTER XXV

USE OF TIME

We read in books several sayings about life which have become proverbial. One of these is: '*Life is short and art is long.*' There is so much to know and to do in this world that the span of life allotted to man, three score and ten or a hundred years, is not sufficient for acquiring knowledge of all the arts and sciences.

Another proverb says 'life is an art and must be cultivated as an art'. That is to say, just as an artist paints a beautiful picture out of raw materials and different colours, so each person must make his life beautiful by means of good thoughts leading to good deeds.

Life indeed is short, but whether a man has lived well or ill depends not on the number of years he has lived, but on the kind of life he has led.

The art of life consists in so arranging the hours of our daily life that not a minute is spent in vain. The habit of delay,—putting off till to-morrow what can and should be done to-day,—is the result of a desultory or irregular mode of life. He who from his youth inures himself to regular hours for work, repose, sleep, and exercise, is able to command time and health, strength, and peace of mind.

We read of many great men, who, by making the best use of their time, attained success in life and became useful citizens and their country's benefactors. The story of Alfred the Great is a familiar instance in point.

Of him it is written that 'his work was of a simple and practical order,' because, 'in politics as in war, or in his after dealings with letters, he took what was closest at hand, and made the best of it.' It is said that 'he found time amidst the cares of State for the daily duties of religion, for converse with strangers, for study and translation, for learning poems by heart, for planning buildings and instructing craftsmen in goldwork, for teaching even falconers and dog-keepers their business.' When asked how he found time for everything, he answered: 'By not losing it.' Nature's law is said to be: 'Either use or lose.' Nature tells us to get good out of everything by making proper use of it and not by wasting it. If we fail to make such use, we lose the object and waste our lives.

Mr. Gladstone, as Lord Morley tells us, was a notable model of this thrift. He worked ten or twelve hours a day and found that habit of close application 'as of old, a cure for ill-humour.' He was careful about both exercise and sleep, stinting neither. He was regular in his correspondence, answering every letter fully and at length by return of post. He kept a diary of the daily events of his life and kept it with unerring regularity to almost the day of his death.

Among the great men of India of our time, Dr. Dadabhai Naoroji, justly styled 'the Grand Old Man of India,' stands as a signal example of the proper management of time. The care he paid to work, exercise, diet, and sleep, and his regularity in everything without the slightest show of excitement or fuss, showed how he had learnt by diligent economy of time to make the best of his life.

He was a man of self-command; he regulated his daily

life with wisdom. He lived a long life of health and noble service to his country, because, throughout, his life was regulated by strict regard to the use of time. It was with him as with Sir Walter Scott, the poet and novelist, who had 'regular hours for everything and let nothing interfere with them.' Remember this and live in the spirit of Victor Hugo's motto:—

To rise at six, to dine at ten,
To sup at six, to sleep at ten,
Makes a man live to ten times ten.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE USE OF HOBBIES

WORK is most valuable and effective when it is varied by timely relaxation. Such relaxation may be found in some pursuit which has no relation to our daily occupation or ordinary work. The pursuit must be one for which we have a special taste and pleasure, and which we love for its own sake as a hobby.

What is a hobby? It is a favourite study which a man pursues because it delights him in his moments of leisure. This is found by some in reading, by some in music, painting, gardening or carpentry. Anything which we find gives us pleasure for its own sake, becomes our hobby when we pursue it as our favourite subject. Its benefit is two-fold. First, it refreshes the mind when the mind is tired after hard work in the serious occupations of life. Secondly, it recreates the mind by forming the habit of doing all that we undertake with joy.

The pursuit of our daily occupation serves as the direct light of our life; the pursuit of a hobby is its side-light. Side-lights are often more valuable than direct light, because they light up the unseen and dark corners of life.

Gladstone was a statesman, whose business was politics and the administration of his country. But he cultivated the hobby of felling trees and found himself vigorous in body and mind for his work. His rival, Disraeli, who became Lord Beaconsfield, found his hobby, not in felling, but in planting trees. Numerous

examples of that kind may be given to show how a hobby, innocent in character and pursued out of mere pleasure, not only cheers up the spirit of man by keeping his mind above care, but proves even more beneficial to the world than pursuits which seem to profit man because of their direct utility.

Leslie Stephen, writing of the brave men who have sailed to the farthest ends of the earth to explore the Arctic regions, endured hardships, and even died in the enterprise, says: 'The energy which has had no direct utilitarian aim has been of most essential service to mankind. If the world has improved even in the sense of being able to support a large population in moderate comfort, the improvement has been not owing, simply nor perhaps chiefly, to those who have consciously laboured to redress grievances and remove causes of misery but to men who have pursued intellectual aims, scientific or artistic, for the pure love of art or science. . . . The devotion of some men of great powers to minute and apparently remote interests constantly leads to unforeseen results.' The same lesson was emphasised by Sir John Tweedy when he said: 'The science of medicine has mainly been advanced by researches of those who had not been directly engaged in the treatment of disease'—in other words, we owe many medical discoveries to men who took to its pursuit as a hobby.

Life becomes a vale of tears, dreary and monotonous, when we pursue it solely for business and profit. It is made enjoyable when to the pursuit of business we add the pursuit of a hobby.

A hobby is pursued for its own sake, not because it brings money, fame or other profit. It is the pleasure which it gives that makes it a hobby; and the habit of

doing with pleasure whatever falls to our lot as our duty is a most valuable help to make the best of life. A man whose life is a mere round of business for money and bread becomes narrow in mind and heart. A man who combines business with a healthy hobby finds pleasure in life.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE

WHATEVER we are, life is given to us for, and is made beautiful by, service to others. We are all servants of one another. Rich and poor, master and servant, father and son, husband and wife, superior and inferior—all rank the same in point of service. We come into this world, said Christ, not to be served by others but to serve others. Sri Ramchandra regarded himself, King though he was, as the servant of his subjects. Sri Krishna became the servant of Arjuna as his charioteer. Our Hindu saints called themselves *dâsâs*, the servants of God, and, therefore, of all men.

What better illustration of devoted service can you find than that of mothers? They give birth to their children, they do not spare themselves in rearing them; they suffer hardships for their sake; and would give up their own lives, if necessary, for their children.

God Himself, says the *Bhagavad Gita*, is man's servant. He serves us all, both the good and the bad, the just and the unjust, by giving regularly the light of his sun and moon and stars, and by all that sustains the life of this world. When we serve others and seek their good sincerely and not merely our own good, we forget ourselves; and the great art of life is to forget one's own petty self and be useful to all who need our help.

Of all its forms, service to those who are below us in rank, position or fortune, is the noblest. It is easy to serve those above us and those who are our equals.

Such service comes naturally. But service to those who are lower in life than ourselves—to God's poor and helpless children, either neglected by the world or afflicted by misfortune—is real service because it is done for love, not for any selfish end.

This joy of life, which comes from the spirit of service, must be acquired as a habit. By nature, we are all more or less selfish and feel tempted to serve ourselves and our own interests rather than the interests of others. We must practise unselfishness so as to make it a part of our nature.

The secret of the power of such self-denial lies in self-control. It is self-command, of which we are taught by the *Mahabharata* that it is the supreme virtue, enabling a man to conquer and control his passions and become a master of himself. Thus it gives him power to master the world. Self-control and self-denial are the sure reward of a young man who takes care to form good habits.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE COURAGE OF CONVICTION

To make the best of life a man must take it seriously. He must have faith in it, faith that life is real, and has a purpose. Hence the saying, *Believe and live.* He who has no faith in life has no faith in himself, and he who has no faith in himself is a doubter. And, as is said in the *Bhagavad Gita*, to the doubter there can be no happiness. The man who has no settled convictions but whose mind is always given to doubts, loses faith in himself and in others, is incapable of achieving anything great or good.

To be a man of convictions is, therefore, to be one whose views are formed carefully, held firmly, and expressed clearly. He is what the *Bhagavad Gita* calls a man of *âsthikya*, one whose opinions and actions are positive, because they leave you in no doubt as to what he thinks and what he does. This virtue of *âsthikya* is praised in the *Gita* as one of the qualities which go to form the *spiritual* wealth of man. In the Bible it is called the virtue of 'Yea,' that is to say, the power of mind which enables us to go through life as men of convictions, not as men who have no settled views but are the prey of doubt and hesitation.

The German philosopher, Goethe, divides men into three classes. The first consists of those who do not use their faculty of reason but who drift in life, instead of leading it with intelligence. The second class is made up of those who do not reason but are the sport of their

feelings, saying and doing whatever their passion, prejudice or ignorance dictates. These are bigots. The third class is of those who reflect, use their reason, form their opinions after mature thought, and act on them with firmness.

The habit of forming convictions and discouraging a doubtful and hesitating state of mind should be cultivated from youth upwards. John Stuart Mill, an original and independent thinker, and a man who had the courage of his convictions, tells us in his *Autobiography* that by careful reading, by patient discussion and conversation on the subjects read, and by putting his thoughts in writing he acquired that habit. The habit consisted in 'never accepting half solutions of difficulties as complete; never abandoning a puzzle but again and again returning to it until it was cleared up; never allowing obscure corners of a subject to remain unexplored, because they did not appear important; never thinking that I perfectly understood any part of a subject until I understood the whole.' That discipline had its natural effect. He was never confused and unsettled. 'When I had taken in any new idea, I could not rest till I adjusted its relation to my old opinions and ascertained exactly how far its effect ought to extend in modifying or superseding them.'

The worst temptation to a student is to become a slave to other people's convictions and to deceive himself with the idea that they are his own, formed after mature thought, whereas there has been no thought of his in their adoption for himself. To become a man of conviction every student should follow Mill's method with patience and perseverance. Hear all points of view with care; turn them over in your mind; examine them

without bias or prejudice; and then decide what is the right conclusion for you to reach and the conviction for you to form, for your action and conduct in life.

Life is not made for doubts but convictions, and the man who has the courage of his convictions is the man who serves and elevates his country.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE IMPORTANCE OF IDEALS

IN life, to be able to make the best of it, we should have a purpose. Having made that purpose our aim, we should steadily pursue it. That steady pursuit requires that we should put our body, mind, and heart, into it. In other words, we should strive to attain the purpose with all our might.

Before a man builds a house, he forms in his mind an idea of its structure. Before he writes a letter, he first thinks out in his own mind what he should write. Thought comes first; action follows. Valmiki composed the *Ramayana* by constantly thinking of Sri Rama as his ideal.

There is a legend of a man who was ugly, but who fell in love with a beautiful woman. He longed to make her acquaintance, win her love, and make her his wife. But his ugliness made him fear to approach her and cultivate her friendship before proposing marriage. He, therefore, wore a mask which made him look beautiful; so masked, he wooed her and won her love. She became his wife. For a year or so after the marriage, the man continued to wear his mask to conceal his natural deformity of face, but he then got tired of it and one day he threw off his mask. He feared his wife might find him ugly and desert him for his deception. But no! The mask had changed his ugliness into beauty, and all, his wife included, found his face a picture of loveliness after the mask had been thrown off. The legend says that

was because his constant pursuit of beauty as his ideal had changed his ugliness into a lovely face. He became what he had beheld. *Yadbhāvam tatbavati*, says the Sanskrit adage.

The fable states a fact. Watch and study the face of a man who lives a life of virtue, prayer, and godliness, and you will not fail to see God in his expression. He has become godlike because he has beheld God as his ideal. That is why the godlike youth Prahlad says that the more you worship and behold God the more does God's glory become reflected in your face. In the Bible we read that the light of God shone on the face of Moses because he followed God as his ideal.

What was it that made Darwin one of the greatest scientists the world has produced? What endowed him with his noble character—his thoughtfulness, his patient search for truth, his strict care in the collection of facts, and his great simplicity of life, free from all pride? All that was due to the fact that when he was a student at College, he looked up to his Professor Henslow as his ideal; he moved and walked in his company; and he became what he beheld—another Henslow in point of character. It has been said, and the saying is confirmed by observation, that the face of a husband and the face of a wife, who have lived together and loved each other intensely, reflect and resemble each other as they grow together in age.

What is the perfect ideal? The *Upanishads* have answered the question. The best ideal for man is God. This thought forms the key to 'the peace chant' of the *Ishopanishad*, which says 'All we see is full, because it is from Fullness.' Another *Upanishad*—the *Kenopanishad*—takes up that idea and embodies it in a prayer,

which a Hindu student in ancient times had to offer before beginning his daily lessons. The prayer runs: 'May all my bodily organs and senses, those of speech, light, hearing, and vigour grow in perfection,' i.e., the perfection of God. Likewise, in the Bible, Christ counsels: 'Be ye perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect.'

It is true that men cannot attain the perfection of God. Neither the *Upanishads* nor Christ say that man can attain that perfection. The *Upanishads* say '*Grow into God's perfection.*' Christ counsels 'Become perfect like God'—meaning, always come by, and advance towards, God's perfection. Our life is a movement, an effort, a striving after. Ours, is, therefore, to have the best ideal in view and keep on advancing towards it.

In striving to advance, we may fail at some steps; we may fall; but if we persevere, if we keep on rising where we fall and make every failure a call to more persistent endeavour to advance, our growth in perfection is assured. Our failures then become preludes to our success in *that* growth. As a Hindu saint puts it, such *fearless*, persistent attempt to advance towards and grow into our best ideal, perfects us by developing our personality. In the words of the poet Tennyson, 'We needs must love the highest when we see it.' That is to say, whenever a great thought or great example is placed before us, whenever it catches our eye or strikes our mind, it is a call to us to *become* it. To obey such call is to have the ideal of perfection and follow it.

In short, when we say perfection is and should be our ideal, we mean that whatever work or duty falls to our lot, we must do it with love for it for its own sake, without care of reward or profit. Have you read the

story of Antonio Stadivari, who made violins with such perfection that they became the wonder and admiration of the world? He was asked why he spent so much time and effort in making his violins perfect of their kind. His answer is given in the following lines of the poem composed about him by the poetess, 'George Eliot':—

> If my hand slack'd,
> I should rob God, since He is fullest God,
> Leaving a blank instead of violins.
> 'Tis God gives skill,
> But not without men's hands. He could not make
> Antonio Stadivari's violins
> Without Antonio.

We are in this world to do God's work as our duty. And that is the ideal of life—to do the utmost for the Highest.

CHAPTER XXX

PROPER PRIDE, WORTHY AMBITION, AND CHIVALRY

ONE of the best advantages of education in a school is that more than anything else it gives opportunities for cultivating the virtue of self-confidence.

This self-confidence, which a young student attains by association with others in play and study by observing discipline, by obedience to teachers, and by the exercise of self-restraint, leads to self-respect.

Self-confidence is proper pride, not the *false* pride which, according to a proverb of the wise Solomon, goes before a fall. False pride makes a man think too much of himself—as more learned, more wise, and greater than others, and entitled to honour from all. It craves for praise, is pleased by flattery, and is angry when not noticed and honoured. But true pride is the virtue of the man, who respects others as he respects himself. He cares not for praise or censure. He stands upon his own merits. He does whatever duty is assigned to him with all care and conscientiousness without the fear or favour of others. He is not dismayed by difficulties or by jealousy or carping criticism. He relies upon the approval of his own conscience for satisfaction with what he can do and has done.

Sri Krishna reminded Arjuna that he should have confidence in himself and do his duty bravely by being proud of himself and of his ancestors. It is the pride of the youth Nachiketa of the *Upanishads*, who spoke the

truth even at the cost of his father's favour and sought true knowledge by questioning, and never boasted that he knew all and better than others. In short, proper pride arising from self-respect respects others.

Because true pride respects others as it respects itself, it is called *humility*. It is a wrong notion to suppose that humility is weakness and is the mark of a coward or a slave or an abject man. It has been said truly that God 'keeps half his pity for the proud.' The proud man—falsely proud—treats others with contempt or discourtesy, boasts of his own doings, and wants others to parade them. But the man of proper pride lets his own life speak of itself for him and is humble because he knows that, being a man, he is frail and has failings and that there are others who are his betters. He, therefore, conducts himself with propriety towards others.

A man who thus goes about life with this self-confidence and humility, is the man of proper pride, and worthy ambition, because his pride is that of self-respect combined with respect for others. His ambition is that which seeks the worthy end of service to others, not of selfish ends. Being fearless in speaking and doing the truth and saying and doing it out of courtesy and kindness becoming a gentleman, he is chivalrous like the knights of old. Such a man stands upon his own conscience and character.

CHAPTER XXXI

FRIENDSHIP

I ONCE heard from a learned Mahomedan a story about the Mogul Emperor, Aurangzebe, and his father, Shah Jehan, who had been Emperor before him but whom Aurangzebe dethroned. When Aurangzebe fought his father, made him a prisoner, and proclaimed himself Emperor, he consulted with himself and his ministers as to the proper punishment to be meted out to Shah Jehan. Some advised that Shah Jehan should be beheaded. But Aurangzebe thought that beheading would be welcomed by Shah Jehan as the best way of ending his life after he had been disgraced and dethroned by his own son. So Aurangzebe wished for such a treatment to his father as could make the latter live and feel life-long misery Aurangzebe decided to confine his father in a close prison, to give him a copy of the *Koran* to read, and place by his side as companion an ignorant and mentally weak man. When this decision was communicated to Shah Jehan in prison, he exclaimed with joy: 'My son could not have given me a better condition of life than this to enjoy. The *Koran,* the word of God, to read the whole day long! That too with another man as a friend by my side to share with delight God's word with me! And that too in this quiet place without the worries and cares of the noisy world outside! O happiest life! God be thanked for it! It is far, far happier than being an Emperor, and carrying the burdens of an Empire.' Soon Shah Jehan found himself provided with a copy of

the *Koran* and a man for his companion and friend. Shah Jehan opened the book, and as he read it out to himself and to his companion line by line and page after page, his soul overflowed with joy. But his companion was listless and unmoved. Shah Jehan did his best to explain to the man by his side in prison the beauties of the holy book. But the man only stared and gaped like a lunatic. And lunatic he was. He had been kept there as Shah Jehan's companion because of his lunacy. When Shah Jehan found that the only man who was given him to be his friend was incapable of sharing and enjoying with him the beautiful inspirations of the *Koran* he cursed himself thus: 'How miserable is this life! No friend to share with me this joy in Allah (God)! Death would be better than this friendless existence.'

Life is made for friendship. Without a friend, life is a desert and misery. Friendship is love and love is of five different kinds. The *Mahabharata* mentions them thus: (1) *Shânti*, Peace; (2) *Dâsya*, Service; (3) *Vâtsalya*, Affection; (4) *Sakhya*, Intimacy; (5) *Mâdhurya*, Loveliness.

Our first friend is God and friendship with Him is of peace. Peace, termed *Shânti* in the Hindu *Shâstrâs*, means that composure which comes when you have controlled your passions and got rid of the enemies who are in your own self, such as anger, jealousy, hatred, covetousness, and the like. When these get the better of you, you become your own enemy. When you have subdued them, you have become your own friend. Before you can make friends of others, you must be your own friend first. To become your own friend you must cultivate the friendship of God in you. To cultivate that you must retire into yourself by meditation, hear the voice of God

in your heart. Then you acquire peace, *Shânti*, which is defined in the *Bhâgavat Purâna* as devoted attachment to God. In the Bible it is called 'the peace that passeth understanding' or peace ineffable.

CHAPTER XXXII

BOOKS AS FRIENDS TO HELP LIFE

BOOKS and friends both help us to make the best of life. When in sorrow or distress, or when the mind is troubled otherwise, and you do not feel equal to serious work, there is nothing like the reading of a good book to restore the mind's balance. Good books are like balm to a wounded soul. They provoke thought, set your mind to think upon what you have read, and enable you to cultivate your imagination.

What is imagination? It is the power to put ourselves by our thought into the situation of others. By it we realize to ourselves their condition before passing judgment upon them.

This is not the only gain from the friendship of good books. The great books which deal with the past, or with the present or with the future make us live by our minds in situations, ages, and among people other than those of our own situation, age, or country. Thus they transport our minds beyond our narrow lives and immediate experiences. They form the brotherhood of the whole human race, because they enable us to realize how vast and grand is man's life, how man seeming little can make his mind, heart, and soul, universal, and how he can become not only a citizen of the world but a citizen of Heaven itself.

To make the best of life by the help of books, the wisest plan is to select as your life's friends a few great and good books. The way to master a great book is pointed out by Sri Jnyaneshwara. He advises us to

study the *Bhagavad Gita* in these words: 'Learn to experience this story by becoming humble in mind in its study; converse without words but in silence with your own mind as to its contents; enjoy it, forgetting your body; before speaking about it to others, assimilate its teachings and principles; get them to sink into your soul.' This means: live in the company of a great book constantly. Read it, study it, brood over it again and again. At every fresh reading it will disclose new thoughts. This is the beauty and the glory of such books as the *Upanishads*, the Bible, the *Bhagavad Gita*, and the *Koran*.

Devote a quarter of an hour daily with unerring regularity to the study of any books of these of your choice. Start the day's work by spending at least a quarter of an hour with a book. If you do this, even the desultory reading of other books, when they catch your eye and come in your way, becomes a pleasure and an inspiration. Desultory reading may be compared to the drawing of water in a sieve Water so drawn does not remain in the sieve. Similarly, he who reads one book after another without careful study does not assimilate what he reads, and his thoughts become loose. He cannot become a clear thinker. If, however, you adhere to a few well-chosen books as your constant friends, the reading of other books serves as a variety, and relieves the monotony of the study of the same books over and over again. Such short separation from your favourite authors for the reading of other books by way of variety eases the mind, relaxes wearied effort of thought, and sends you back to the old love of your favourite books with increased affection. 'Short absence,' says Milton, 'urges sweet return.'

But whatever book you read, read it with thought, discrimination, and judgment; refuse to be the slave of any author, teacher, orator, poet, politician, or philosopher. Use your mind. Do not abuse it by allowing yourself to be a tool in the hands of others.

CHAPTER XXXIII

RELIGION AS HELP TO LIFE

'RELIGION', says a great philosopher, 'is born ere thought begins.' A baby at birth not only brings religion with it but is religious first before it grows to be anything else afterwards.

A baby from the moment of its birth does not know who or what it is, and yet it trusts and loves its mother.

Love is the first impulse of the human heart; the desire for knowledge comes afterwards. To know you must love. In the words of a Hindu saint, love is the root and knowledge is the fruit of life. Love is not only the root of life, love is life itself. When Christ was asked by a man: 'What shall I do to save myself?' Christ answered: 'Love the Lord thy God and love thy neighbour as thyself.' When in the *Bhagavad Gita* Arjuna asked Sri Krishna 'Who is the favourite of God?' Sri Krishna replied: 'He is the best favourite of God who hates none, who is friendly and kind to all.' That is love. Love of parents, brothers, and sisters, of husband and wife, love of country, love of beauty, love of virtue—all is love which rules and binds us all together into the various relations of life. When love does not exist we are lifeless.

It is said of Buddha that he once met the giant of Hate. The giant, drawing his sword to kill Buddha, roared with these words: 'Love shall yield to hate'. Buddha, calm and collected, smilingly replied: 'Then I love even you'. The story concludes that immediately

the giant changed into a dove, which is the emblem, of love and peace.

Love, as taught by religion, not only conquers everything, even hatred, but it is the only sign of the infinite in man. The more you love, the more you wish to love —there is no end to love. On the other hand, the more you hate, the more you get tired of hatred and feel ashamed of and disgusted with yourself. Shakespeare brings out that plain fact of life with telling effect. Read his play *Richard III*, whom Shakespeare portrays as a perfect villain, who hated all who stood in the way of his rise to power and kingdom. Richard murdered them all but how did he end? He ended his life by hating himself.

Read Shakespeare's play, *Romeo and Juliet*. There you find that Romeo belonged to a family which hated Juliet's. The two—Romeo and Juliet—saw each other at a party; they fell in love with each other. Romeo asked Juliet whether she would continue to love him. She replied that not only would she continue to love him but already her love for him was becoming unlimited.

God is infinite, says religion—infinite in knowledge, power, and love. This religious principle of love binds society and makes Governments stable. No one should treat another as a slave or a means to his own selfish end. All men are God's children, and there is no high or low. By love we should conquer life, and gain it.

CHAPTER XXXIV

RELIGION AS HELP TO LIFE—*contd.*

ANOTHER word for love is *charity*, which is derived from the Latin word *carus*, meaning *dear* (costly). When you give money, food or land to another for nothing in exchange, it is called charity, because it has cost you something. But what you can so give in charity is limited. Not so with the feeling of love or charity itself which inspires the gift. It is limitless. You can go on loving and the love grows without end as you go on. Therefore, says Bacon: 'Of charity alone there is no excess.'

What is the value of that infinite feeling of love in us? To that religion gives the answer. It says that our love is measured by God not by the value of what we actually give as a proof of it, but by its own intensity. The Hindu saint Tukaram in one of his hymns addresses God thus: 'I cannot find Thee by knowledge or austerities. Therefore I measure Thee, Who art infinite, by my devotion.'

Several persons made gifts to Christ. All of them were rich gifts. But a poor woman who loved Christ most intensely, made a gift to him of but a *mite*, i.e., one-fourth of a farthing. Christ valued it more than all other gifts, though these were far more costly, because though the value of the mite was the smallest, yet the heart of the poor widow, which prompted the gift, abounded in love or charity. And her gift of love, trivial as it seemed, has become a 'memorial unto generations.'

But religion teaches more the unlimited power of Love as the law and fulfilment of life. It says that such is the religious nature of man from his very birth that even excess of hatred can change into love. In the *Bhagavad Gita* Sri Krishna advises Arjuna in these words: 'Love God, be devoted to Him; if you cannot love Him, at least hate Him intensely and your excess of hatred will change into love.' This looks like a paradox but it is not. The *Bhâgavat Purana* explains it thus: 'A man becomes that which he contemplates, sees or hears always, awake or asleep.' So Poundra, who most bitterly hated Sri Krishna, ended by being changed into Sri Krishna's form.

That is how saints won the love of men who hated them. The Hindu saint Tukaram was once beaten with brambles by a farmer who bitterly hated him. When, shortly after, Tukaram heard that the farmer was laid up with fever, Tukaram went to the farmer's house and shampooed his body. The result was that the enemy changed into a lover of Tukaram. So also St. Paul in the Bible was at first a bitter enemy of Christ and persecuted Christians. But one day he felt a whisper in his heart: 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' And Saul, the bigoted enemy, became Paul, the Saint of Christianity.

Such is the infinite power of faith and love as taught by religion. Religion is, therefore, the best help to one who desires to make the best of life.

Our schools, hospitals, asylums, orphanages, in fact all political, social and industrial institutions, are founded on the religious principles of love or charity. Nay, in the words of James Martineau, 'If you would improve the world you must have the hearts of men set upon

heaven as their ideal. The *Bhágavat Puràna* says 'Heaven is not in the next world but in this; for it means the rise of righteousness in this very life and on this very Earth.' Sri Shankaracharya glorified India as जननी जन्मभूमिश्च स्वर्गादपि गरीयसी i.e. 'our Mother' our Motherland, higher than Heaven itself,' because here, now, in this very life, India presents to us the opportunity of embellishing her to be heavenly by becoming heavenly ourselves by loving service, righteous lives, and kind deeds of thoughtful charity.

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